Story by Kyo Shirodaira Art by Eita Mizuno

15 FINAL

Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING 15

STORY/KYO SHIRODAIRA
ART/EITA MIZUNO

[SPIRAL]

Vol.15 last episode

Story : Kyo SHIRODAIRA
Art : Eita MIZUNO

I still haven't found what I'm looking for

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CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO
GOOD-BYE SONG (PART II)
...HI-ZUMI...
...DON'T MAKE ME THE ONLY ONE TO DECIDE OUR FUTURE.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO
GOOD-BYE SONG (PART II)

IF THERE'S A FUTURE YOU WANT, THEN TAKE IT BY FORCE.
EITHER YOU WANT TO BE WITH ME...
...OR YOU WANT TO BE KILLED BY ME.
IF YOU WANT TO BE WITH ME...
...THEN SNATCH THIS GUN FROM MY HAND BEFORE I SHOOT YOU DOWN RIGHT HERE AND NOW.
...BUT...

...IF YOU WANT A FUTURE...
...BUT ARE STILL WILLING TO LET ME PRESS THIS GUN UP AGAINST YOUR HEAD...
...THEN THIS IS GOOD-BYE FOR GOOD.
BECAUSE I WILL SEE YOU DEAD IN AN INSTANT.
...AHH.
I GET IT.
THAT SEEMS LIKE A FAIR ENOUGH PROPOSAL.
...I GUESS...
KYU (SQUEAK)

BA
(LUNGE)
...IT'S TOO HARD FOR YOU TO SHOOT SOMEONE WHO'S BEIN' PASSIVE!!
DON
(BLAM)
U·
ZA
(SKID)

AYUMU...
...YOU REALLY ARE TOO NICE.
SA (HIDE)
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HESITANT EVEN AT THIS DECISIVE STAGE.
JIRI (CRUNCH)
PASHI (RUSTLE)
YOU WEREN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO SHAKE OFF THE DOUBTS.
YOU COULDN'T MAKE UP YOUR MIND WHETHER TO KILL ME OR NOT.

SO LONG AS YOU STAY AS YOU ARE, YOU CAN NEVER BEAT ME...
...BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE ANY DOUBTS.
WHAT I WANT MOST IS A FUTURE WITH YOU!
HERE I COME.
AYUMU ...!!

THIS IS A SHOW-DOWN!
ZA (SKID)
NI (GRIN)
BUN (HURL)

NOW THAT I'VE LOST MY GUN, YOU SUDDENLY CAN'T GO ON THE OFFENSIVE...
...WITH ALL YOUR MISGIVINGS, YOU CAN'T FIRE ON ME WHEN I'M DEFENSE-LESS!
THAT'S THE BIGGEST OPENING YOU'VE LEFT YOURSELF!
AYUMU ...

AND YOU CAN'T DODGE THE GUN SPEEDING TOWARD YOU!
YOU CAN'T TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO FIRE AT ME!

AN EASY VICTORY...
I'LL USE THAT TIME TO SNATCH AWAY YOUR GUN, TOO!
AND THEN I WIN!

GA
GA (SNATCH)
.....

DOW (THUD)
KUH!
BA (WHIP)
...WHY?

WHY'D YOU THROW YOUR GUN TOO!?
BECAUSE I KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO.
YOU THINK I'M PLAGUED WITH DOUBT.
SO I KNEW YOU'D TRY TO ACT ON THAT WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY.
THAT BEING THE CASE, I TOSSED MY GUN AS YOU THREW YOURS.
BUT FOR ME TO TAKE YOU BY SURPRISE ...
...I HAD TO DO SOMETHING THAT I, BEING FULL OF HESITATION, WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO DO.

THEN WHY DON'T WE BOTH FIRE NOW?
...BUT YOU WERE ABLE TO CATCH AND AIM A GUN WHEN IT SUDDENLY CAME HURTLING TOWARD YOU.
SINCE I KNEW THE GUN WOULD BE THROWN AT ME, IT WAS RELATIVELY EASY FOR ME TO CATCH IT...
BUT I SHOULD'VE EXPECTED THIS OF YOU...
...I'D SHOOT THE GUN RIGHT OUT OF YOUR HAND, SEE?
BEFORE YOU COULD EVEN PULL THE TRIGGER WITH THAT SHAKY FINGER...
.....
YOU STILL DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?
SU (SHFF)

YOU'VE ALREADY LOST.
KIN (CLINK)
I REMOVED THE BULLETS FROM THE GUN I THREW.
KIN
KIN
YOU CAN'T FIRE.
KIN
SU (POINT)
KACHI (CLICK)
KACHI

THIS IS GOOD-BYE.
HIZUMI.

...IT'S WEIRD...
YOU JUST LEARNED SOMETHIN' CRAZY ABOUT YOUR GENES AND WERE FORCED INTO MAKIN' A HUGE DECISION...
AND YOUR HANDS WERE SHAKIN', YOU WERE SO UNSURE OF YOURSELF.
SO HOW IS IT YOU SO SMOOTHLY ANTICIPATED MY ACTIONS AND ARE ACTIN' ALL COOL AND COLLECTED!?
IT'S WEIRD, AYUMU ...!!

IT'S JUST TOO WEIRD!!
HA (GASP)
DON'T TELL ME...!
...THAT'S RIGHT.
I'D MADE UP MY MIND LONG AGO.
I PREDICTED EVERYTHING YOU'VE TOLD ME HERE.
I DON'T HAVE AN OUNCE OF INDECISION.
I ONLY PRETENDED LIKE I DID.
MY WILL IS SO FIXED IN STONE!..
...THAT I HAD THE TIME AND ENERGY TO PREPARE FOR THIS.

ZO (SHIVER)
IT WAS ALL A FARCE.
SO THAT I COULD MAKE YOU REALIZE THAT...
...EVEN IF IT'S ALL IN ACORDANCE WITH MY BROTHER'S PLANS...
...I HAVE A REASONING THAT WILL SECURE ME A SURE WIN.
WHA...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THIS CRUEL REALITY...
...AND MY CONNECTION WITH YOU WERE ALL WITHIN MY CALCULA-TIONS.
IT WAS PART OF MY STRATEGY FOR CREATING A SITUATION THAT WILL SAVE THE BLADE CHILDREN.

I'M NOT GOING TO KILL ANYBODY.
NOT EVEN MY BROTHER, WHOM I CAN'T FORGIVE.
I'LL OVERCOME THIS DESTINY AND LEAVE BEHIND SOMETHING WORTHWHILE.
IF I'M NOT GOING TO KILL MY BROTHER ...
...I DON'T EVEN HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO KILL YOU.
THERE'S NO ROOM THERE FOR DOUBT TO SQUEEZE ITSELF IN.
SU (DROP)
...BUT...
...EVEN SO, THIS IS STILL GOOD-BYE...
... HIZUMI.

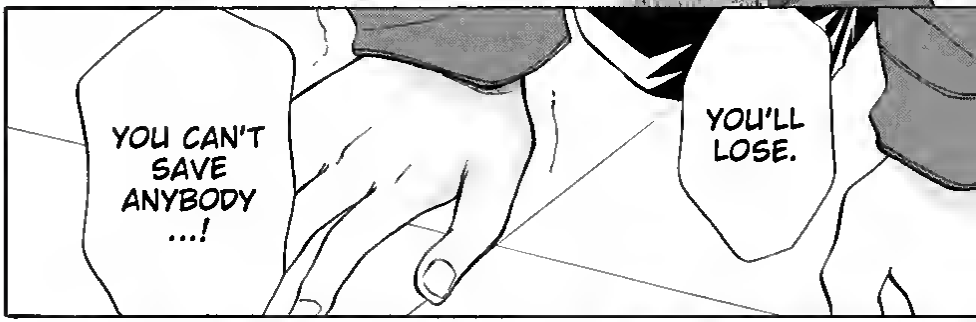
WE'RE GOING TO GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS...
I'M NOT GOING TO KILL YOU...
...AND SPEND THE REST OF OUR LIVES ALONE BEFORE DEATH COMES TO CLAIM US.
...BUT I'M NOT GOING TO JOIN YOU EITHER.
TA (TAP)
SU (SHFF)

DO YOU GET WHAT YOU'RE SAYIN'!?
GASHI (GRAB).
WAIT A MINUTE, AYUMU!
WAI ...!
ARE YOU SAYIN' YOU'VE ACCEPTED ALL THE DESPAIR!?
THAT YOU'VE ACCEPTED THE DARKNESS THAT ENVELOPS US!?
HOW CAN YOU CHOOSE SOLITUDE!?
HOW CAN YOU LIVE WITHOUT KILLIN' ME OR KIYOTAKA!?
WHAT GOOD IS THAT GOING TO DO!?
...I'M TELLING YOU.

...THAT IS PRECISELY ...
...MY WEAPON.
MY STRENGTH IS THE STRENGTH OF A HAVE-NOT.
YOU SAID SO YOURSELF, REMEMBER?
IT'S ALL THAT DESPAIR...
...THAT'S GOING TO SERVE AS MINE AND THE BLADE CHILDREN'S HOPE.
SO I...
...HAVE TO LOSE YOU.
THIS DESPAIR AND DARKNESS...
...WEREN'T FORCED UPON ME BY FATE.

MY DESPAIR WILL GIVE MEANING TO THE HOPE THAT KANON HILBERT LEFT BEHIND.
IN ORDER TO SAVE THEM WITHOUT KILLING ANYBODY ...
...AND IN ORDER FOR ME TO WIN, I SOUGHT AND GAINED IT FOR MYSELF.
...I'M GOING TO SHOW THAT IT CAN MEAN SOMETHING.

EVEN IF YOU DO, YOU'RE GOIN' TO DIE SOON ANYWAY, REMEMBER?
AND YOU CAN'T GET THAT BACK FROM KIYOTAKA, SEE!?
YOU CAN'T HOPE TO WIN AGAINST KIYOTAKA OR YOUR FATE!!
YOU CAN'T...
THAT'S DELUSIONAL!
... THAT'S ...


YOU CAN'T SAVE ANYBODY ...!
YOU'LL LOSE.

...MY FINAL VICTORY IS THE ONLY THING IT CAN'T TAKE AWAY.
EVEN IF MY GENETIC SPIRAL TAKES ME DOWN...

I'M NOT PLANNING ON TAKING ANYTHING BACK.

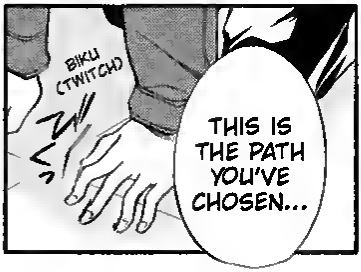
EVEN IF I DIE, SO LONG AS MY REASONING REMAINS...
...MY VICTORY WON'T BE TAKEN AWAY.
IT'S NOT DELUSIONAL OR FAKE.
I HAVE MY REASONING.
...HIZUMI.
...SPENDING THE LITTLE LIFE I HAVE LEFT COMFORTABLY.
I'D KILL MY BROTHER ...
...AND TAKE WHATEVER I WANTED...
IF I STAYED WITH YOU, I'M SURE I'D HAVE A LOT OF FUN.

A LIFE I'VE ALWAYS WANTED ...
GYU (CLENCH)
THE TRUTH IS...
...DEEP DOWN...
...I WANT TO DO THAT SO BADLY, IT'S ALMOST MADDENING ...

SO EVEN IF I LOSE EVERY-THING...
...I CAN'T EVER CHOOSE IT.
EVEN IF IT'S ONE FORM OF SALVATION FOR ME...
...IT REALLY WOULD BE A MISTAKE.
GUSHA (CRUSH)
BUT...
...IT'D BE A MISTAKE.
PASHIN (RUSTLE)
...TH...
THAT'S ...

YOU CAN GO ON AND DO WHATEVER YOU WANT, BUT THEN, WHAT ABOUT ME...!!?
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO IF YOU LEAVE ME IN THIS DARKNESS ALL BY MYSELF!?

YOU CAN'T GO BACK.
AND YOU KNEW THAT.


BIKU (TWITCH)
THIS IS THE PATH YOU'VE CHOSEN...

THE MOMENT YOU KILLED KANON HILBERT...
...OUR PATHS SPLIT.

DON'T ASK ME.

UNTIL YOUR GENES SMOTHER THE LIFE OUT OF YOU...
...SO YOU HAVE TO FACE THE CONSE-QUENCES.
...THAT CHOICE WILL RUN ENDLESSLY THROUGH YOUR MIND AS YOU TREMBLE BY YOURSELF.
CHA (CLACK)
SU (RAISE)
WAIT ...
... AYUMU ...
CHARI (CLINK)
DON'T GO.
YOU CAN'T GO...!

DAN (BLAM)
BISHI (CRACK)
...IF YOU WANT TO SHOOT ME, GO AHEAD AND TRY.
PARA (CRUMBLE)
GATA
GATA (SHAKE)
GATA
CHIIIN (PIIING)
SU (SWSH)
WITH THOSE SHAKY HANDS, YOU'LL NEVER HIT ME, EVEN AT CLOSE RANGE.

GAA (WARRP)
TA (TAP)
PATAN (SHUT)
AH...
AH...

BAN (BANG)
DAMMIT...!
THIS IS NOTHING...
PATA (PLOP)
PATA

PATA
(PLOP)
PATA

BAN (BANG)
DAMMIT...!
THIS IS NOTHING...

IT'S NOTHING TO HANG MY HEAD ABOUT...
I...
GIRI (CLENCH)
I WILL NOT ...
...BE BEATEN ...!!

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE
BEYOND BABEL
BARIN
(SHATTER)
HYUOOOOO
(WHOOOO)
PARI
(CRUNCH)

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE
BEYOND BABEL

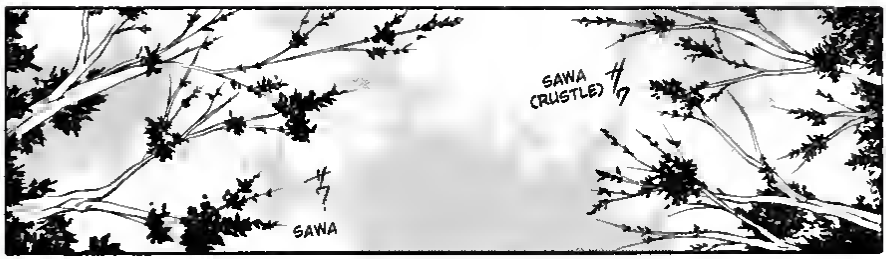
NA-
NARUMI-SAN!!
YO.
YOU'RE LATE.
WITH THIS TRACKING DEVICE ON ME, I THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE BEEN HERE A WHILE AGO.
PE (FLING)
I JUST DISCOVERED IT IN THE ELEVATOR.
.....
SO YOU NOTICED IT?
PASHI (CATCH)
.....
I REALLY CAN'T LET DOWN MY GUARD AROUND YOU.

...WHAT HAPPENED TO HIZUMI?
...DON'T WORRY.
EVERYTHING WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN.
MY REASONING WAS SPOT-ON.
I'VE STILL GOT A FIRM GRASP ON HOPE.

DON'T TELL ME YOU...
...PARTED WITH HIZUMI YOURSELF?
I'M NOT FOOLISH ENOUGH TO THINK I CAN BEAT MY BROTHER WITHOUT MAKING SOME SACRIFICES.
I'D ALREADY DECIDED A WHILE AGO THAT I'D EVENTUALLY HAVE TO SEVER TIES.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME SO MUCH.
TON (PAT)

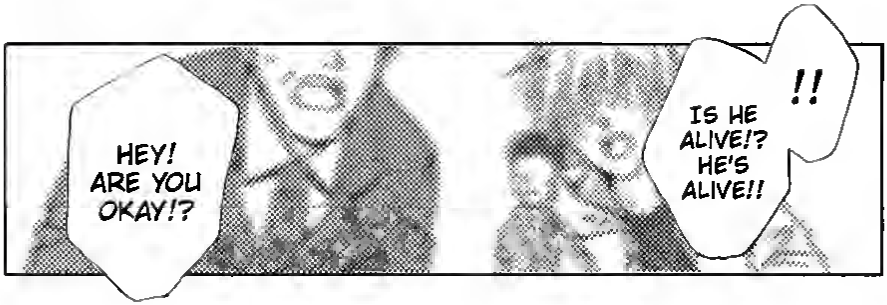
BAKI (CRACK)
BAKI
DAAN (THWAM)
BEKI (SNAP)
BARIN (SHATTER)
NARU—
KYAAAAAA!
SOMEBODY FELL!!
THE OBSER-VATION DECK!
WHAT WAS THAT?

...THEN NONE OF US WOULD HAVE HAD TO SUFFER ALL THAT WE HAVE.
ZAWA (CHILL)
IT COULDN'T BE...
...IF THAT'S ENOUGH TO KILL HIM...



...MADE THE LEAP.

...AHH, I...



...BUT HERE I AM, STILL ALIVE...

THE OBSERVATION DECK SHOULDA BEEN A GOOD NINETY METERS UP...

INCREDIBLE! IT'S A MIRACLE!!
...I'M SO LUCKY, IT'S DOWNRIGHT DISGUSTIN'.
DID YOU FORESEE THIS TOO?
WELL... AYUMU?
THAT TREE BROKE HIS FALL...
THE WIND MUST'VE SLOWED HIM DOWN TOO.

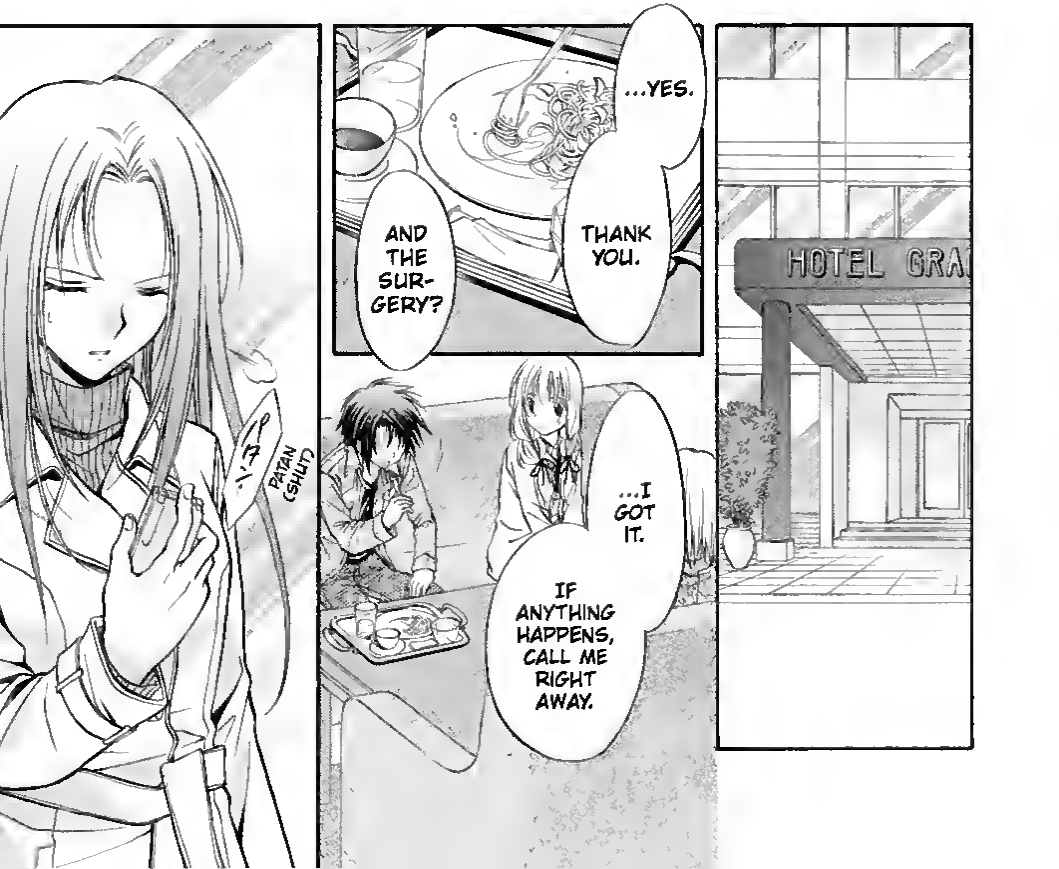
HEY! HANG IN THERE!!
THERE'S NOTHIN' WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.
WE CAN'T BEAT FATE.
HAS SOMEBODY CALLED THE AMBULANCE YET!?
GET AN AMBULANCE HERE!
ALL WE CAN DO IS WAIT IN THE DARK WHILE DEATH COMES STRAIGHT FOR US.
SAWA (RUSTLE)
UNDER THIS SKY...

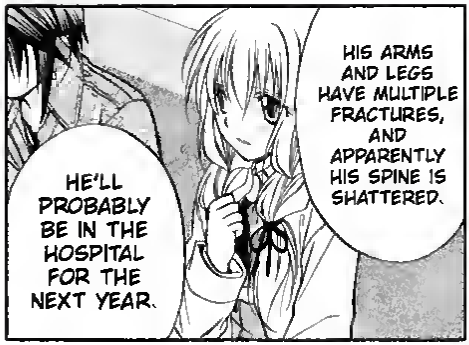
BATAN (SLAM)
AYUMU-KUN!
THIS IS...
AS ANYONE WOULD EXPECT, HE'S SERIOUSLY INJURED.
BUT HIS CONDITION ISN'T LIFE-THREAT-ENING.
HUH?
YOU OUGHT TO CHECK UP ON HIM AFTER HE'S BEEN ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL.

...THERE'S NO PLACE THAT BLESSES US...

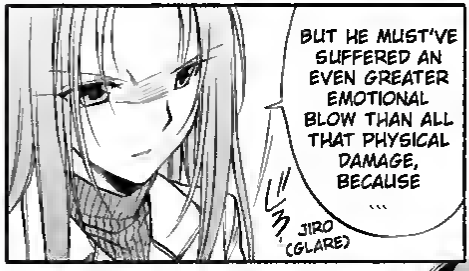
...AYUMU-KUN...
...WHAT...
...ARE YOU THINKING...?
YOU KNOW EVERYTHING NOW, DON'T YOU?
YEAH.
ABOUT ME AND HIZUMI BEING CLONES.
AND THE LITTLE TIME WE BOTH HAVE LEFT TO LIVE...
THIS WRAPS UP THE PROBLEM WITH HIZUMI.
HE'LL DIE WITHOUT TURNING INTO THE "DEVIL."
SO ALL THAT'S LEFT IS THE PROBLEM OF THE BLADE CHILDREN.
WE'RE MAKING PRETTY GOOD PROGRESS, DON'T YOU THINK?
はあ
HAA (SIGH)

I HAVEN'T EATEN LUNCH YET.
BUT BOY, AM I HUNGRY.


HOTEL GRA
...YES.
THANK YOU.
AND THE SUR-GERY?
...I GOT IT.
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, CALL ME RIGHT AWAY.
PATAN (SHUT)


HIS ARMS AND LEGS HAVE MULTIPLE FRACTURES, AND APPARENTLY HIS SPINE IS SHATTERED.
HE'LL PROBABLY BE IN THE HOSPITAL FOR THE NEXT YEAR.

HIZUMI'S A WRECK, HEAD TO TOE.
BUT THEY SAY HE'S OUT OF DANGER.


BUT HE MUST'VE SUFFERED AN EVEN GREATER EMOTIONAL BLOW THAN ALL THAT PHYSICAL DAMAGE, BECAUSE ...
JIRO (GLARE)

KACHA (CLACK)

... WHERE ...

...THEY'RE SAYING HIS FACE IS THE FACE OF A CORPSE.
WITH A LITTLE REST, I'M SURE HE'LL GET HIS COLOR BACK.
THEY SHOULD JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE.

...YOU'RE AS BIG A WRECK AS HIZUMI IS, AREN'T YOU!?
YOU LOOK CALM AND PEACEFUL, BUT...
WHERE IS THE HOPE IN THIS...!?
YOUR HEART SEVERED YOU OFF FROM YOUR ONE AND ONLY TRUE COMPANION ...!
AND YOUR BODY'S BEEN FITTED WITH A GENETIC TIME BOMB!
YOU'RE BOTH ON VERGE OF TOTAL COLLAPSE!!
TELL ME!
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR SENSE...
...FOCUSING INSTEAD ON A DREAM WHERE EVERYTHING WORKS OUT!?
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU CAN POSSIBLY DO AT THIS POINT!!?

...EVERY-BODY'S GOING TO DIE...
...AND ALL HOPE ALONG WITH IT...
THEN IT REALLY WILL BE OVER...!
KACHI (CLINK)
.....
DEATH DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THE IMMEDIATE DEMISE OF HOPE.
WHAT WILL KILL HOPE ARE THOSE WHO REMAIN.

IN THIS WORLD...
...THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE FATED TO NEVER SEE THEIR DREAMS FULFILLED BEFORE DEATH STRIKES THEM AT RANDOM.
SUDDENLY DECAPITATED IN A CAR CRASH...
...OR KILLED BY ROBBERS...
...OR TOLD THEY HAVE ONLY SO MUCH TIME LEFT TO LIVE BECAUSE OF A TERRIBLE DISEASE...
IT'S NOT AN UNCOMMON STORY.
KACHA (CLINK)
OUR CASE IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT, BUT...
...EVERY-BODY HAS THAT CHANCE OF DYING AN UNEXPECTED DEATH.
...IS JUST TOO MUCH.
RUTHER-FORD...
...TO SAY THAT EVERYBODY'S HOPE COULD END WITH THEIR DEATHS...

THOSE WHO SURVIVE HAVE TO KEEP FIGHTING ...
...TO MAKE THE DEATHS A SINGLE STONE IN A CRITICAL FOUNDATION.
THAT'S WHY THOSE WHO ARE LEFT HAVE TO CLING TO HOPE.
EVEN IF SOMEONE MEETS HIS OR HER END BEFORE EXPECTED ...
...OR MAKES COUNTLESS MISTAKES...
...SO LONG AS THE SURVIVORS CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR IT, HOPE WILL NOT DIE.
...BUT IF THEY ATTEMPT TO UNDO ALL OF THOSE MISTAKES, THEY ACHIEVE NOTHING.
WHAT WE MUST DO NOW IS RECOGNIZE OUR MISTAKES ...
...AND ACT IN WAYS THAT WILL NOT RENDER THEM POINTLESS.
...MOST PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY MADE COUNTLESS MISTAKES IN LIFE.

KACHA (CLINK)
SO LONG AS THOSE WHO ARE LEFT...
...DON'T LOSE THE WILL TO DO SO...
...HOPE...
...WILL NEVER BE LOST.
KANON HILBERT'S DEATH MUST BE DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO BEAR...
...BUT IF YOU DON'T BEAR IT, HIS DEATH WILL BECOME A SIMPLE ACT OF RANDOM CRUELTY.
THAT'S WHY I LEFT HIZUMI...
...AND AM TALKING TO YOU AS I AM NOW.
HIS DEATH...
...WAS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE MORE PIECE OF THE PICTURE OF HOPE.

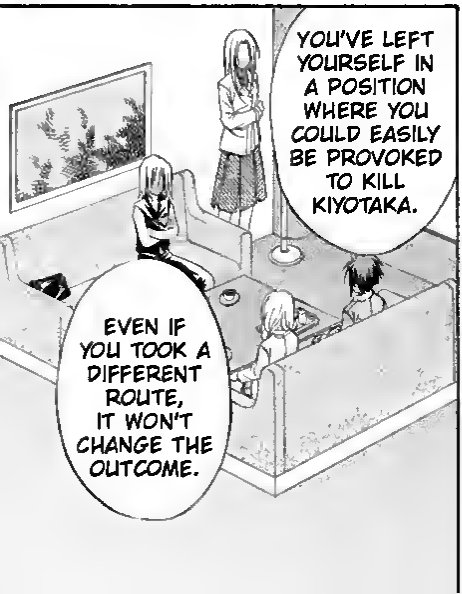
BUT...
...I DON'T THINK KANON HILBERT SHOULD HAVE DIED IN THE FIRST PLACE.
NOT PUTTING UP ANY FIGHT TO SURVIVE...
...AND DYING AN EASY DEATH WHILE ENTRUSTING THE CLEANUP TO THOSE LEFT BEHIND IS A COWARDLY THING TO DO.
...SO I BLAME HIM FOR THAT.
BUT WE CAN'T UNDO HIS DEATH.
SO AS HIS SURVIVORS, WE HAVE TO FIND THE HOPE IN IT.
THERE WILL PROBABLY BE MANY SACRIFICES AHEAD OF US...
...AND I WON'T BE AROUND MUCH LONGER...
...BUT...

...MY LOGIC WILL NOT DIE.
...EVEN AFTER I DIE, SO LONG AS YOU GUYS HOLD ON TO HOPE...
WITHOUT KILLING ANYONE...
I'M GOING TO OVERCOME THE FATE THAT IS MY BROTHER.
...I'M GOING TO CREATE HOPE, NOT DESPAIR.

YES? WHAT IS IT?
I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BUT...
...WOULD YOU DO ME A FAVOR?
SU (LIFT)
I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO GO TO HER HOSPITAL ROOM, SO...
...COULD YOU PLEASE GIVE THIS TO MY WIFE FOR ME?
UH...
S...
SURE.
SHE'S IN ROOM 521...

...BUT...
...YOU REJECTED HIZUMI SO KANON'S DEATH WOULD NOT BE IN VAIN.

BUT IN DOING SO, YOU UNDERMINED YOUR OWN HEART...
...AND AMPLIFIED YOUR HATRED FOR KIYOTAKA ...
...INTO A NEED TO KILL.


YOU'VE LEFT YOURSELF IN A POSITION WHERE YOU COULD EASILY BE PROVOKED TO KILL KIYOTAKA.
EVEN IF YOU TOOK A DIFFERENT ROUTE, IT WON'T CHANGE THE OUTCOME.

MADOKA NARUMI.

...IT'S AS KIYOTAKA THOUGHT.
KANON'S DEATH...
...IN FACT ONLY ACCELERATED A FATE THAT WILL NULLIFY EVERYTHING.
BUT MY LIFE'S STILL LIMITED.
ONCE IT REACHES ITS LIMIT...
...ANY HATRED OR BLOODLUST I MAY HARBOR GOES AWAY, RIGHT?
ALL THE BETTER WHEN YOU THINK OF HOW YOUR HOPE IS LINKED TO IT.
IF YOU DIE, HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO SURVIVE MUCH LONGER AFTER YOU?
EVEN SO.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU TELL US THAT HOPE WILL COME OF IT...
...DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE TARGETED THE BLADE CHILDREN WILL ADMIT THEY WERE WRONG WITH A FEW SIMPLE WORDS?

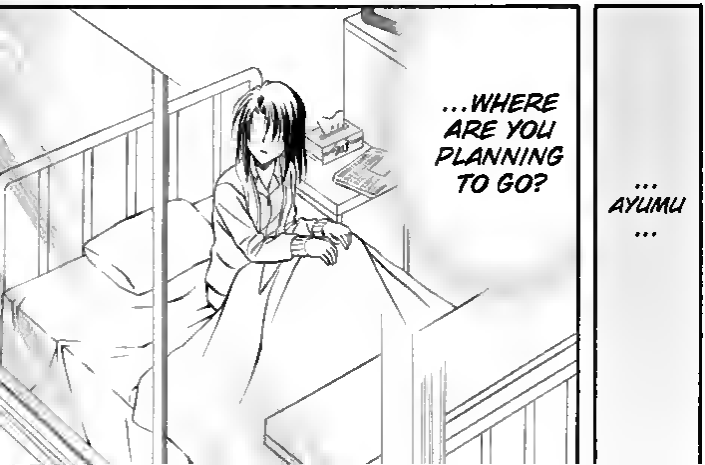
IT'S ONLY BECAUSE YOU'RE AROUND THAT WE'VE MANAGED TO MAKE IT THIS FAR.
BUT WHEN YOU DIE, THE BLADE CHILDREN WILL BE KILLED WITHOUT HESITATION.
THERE WON'T BE ANYONE LEFT TO CARRY ON HOPE.
AND THEN HOPE WILL DIE.
IT'LL DISAP-PEAR.
YOUR LOGIC'S FALLEN APART.
YOU CAN'T SAVE ANYBODY.
...RUTHER-FORD...

...THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SAVE YOU...
SIGH...
...IS YOU YOUR-SELF.
READILY ACCEPTING THE ILLUSION THAT SOME GOD OR CREATOR WHO SHOWS UP OUT OF NOWHERE IS GOING TO SAVE YOU...
...IS JUST PLAIN WRONG.
SU (RISE)
YOU WERE ALL WRONG...
...AND YOU FAILED.
ALL I CAN DO IS LEAVE BEHIND HOPE FOR YOU.

THE HOPE THAT COULD MAKE YOU ALL THINK...
...YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO SAVE YOUR-SELVES.
WHAT DO YOU HAVE UP YOUR SLEEVE?
.....
...YOU.

I'M GOING TO THRASH KIYOTAKA NARUMI SO BAD THAT HE'LL NEVER SCHEME UP ANOTHER OUTRAGEOUS PLOT.
AND...
...NO MATTER WHAT BECOMES OF THIS BODY...
GI (STLG)
...I'M NOT GOING TO DIE SO EASILY.
IN THAT WAY, HOPE WILL LIVE ON.
IT WILL KEEP THOSE WHO ARE CONVINCED OF THIS RIDICULOUS "FATE" AT BAY...
...AND CREATE A CHANCE FOR THE BLADE CHILDREN TO SAVE THEMSELVES.

I'LL TELL YOU...
...THE DETAILS OF MY LOGIC.
THE TOWER TO SALVATION...
...THAT I'M ATTEMPTING TO BUILD.


...AYUMU...
...WHERE ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO?

IF YOU'RE HURTING YOURSELF TRYING TO ACT LIKE YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD...
...ALL YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE BEHIND IS REGRET, DON'T YOU SEE...?
KON (KNOCK) KON
NARUMI-SAAAN.
GACHA (CLACK)
I'VE COME WITH A PACKAGE FOR YOU FROM YOUR HUSBAND!
...HUH?
HE SAID HE WAS TOO BUSY TO COME HERE HIMSELF.
BUT MY, SUCH A HANDSOME HUSBAND YOU HAVE!

ENVELOPE: TO MADOKA

DOES THIS MEAN...

...THE END IS NEAR...?

...WILL BECOME REALITY?
WHILE AYUMU NARUMI ...
...IS PILING THOSE SAME PIECES ON THE BOARD ONE ON TOP OF THE ANOTHER...
...IN HIS ATTEMPT TO BUILD A TOWER OF SALVATION.
...KIYOTAKA IS FORCING THE PIECES ON THE BOARD TO CONFLICT WITH ONE ANOTHER...
...TO OFFSET ONE ANOTHER ...
...AND REVERT EVERY-THING BACK TO ZERO.
BOTH ARE USING THE SAME MATERIALS.
BUT ONE CON-STRUCTED A LOGIC OF DESTRUC-TION...
...WHILE THE OTHER CONSTRUCTED ONE OF CREATION.
I CAN'T TELL WHICH OF THEIR LOGICS...
...IS MORE BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED.

...AYUMU-KUN'S LOGIC FEELS LIKE IT COULD COLLAPSE AT ANY MOMENT.
COMPARED TO KIYOTAKA'S LOGIC...
SU (FWP)
.....
AFTER IT'S BEEN BUILT UP SO HIGH, IT'S ONLY NATURAL IT SHOULD TOPPLE DOWN.
LIKE THE TOWER OF BABEL.
SFX: GI (SQUEEZE)
...ISN'T HIS TRUST IN HIS LOGIC THE ONLY THING SUPPORTING HIS HEART?
HIS PLAN RIDES ON WHETHER HIS HEART HOLDS OUT TILL THE END...
...BUT NOW THAT HE'S LOST HIZUMI, WHAT'S SUPPORTING HIS HEART TO BEGIN WITH?

THE TOWER OF BABEL THAT SEEMS ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE IS WHAT'S SUPPORTING HIS HEART.
GYU (SQUISH)
WHAT'S HOLDING UP THAT TOWER IS HIS HEART.
IT'S A COMPLETE SHAM.
WHEN TWO UNSTABLE THINGS ARE THE VERY THINGS HOLDING EACH OTHER UP, NOTHING'S GOING TO CHANGE.
YEAH.
IT'S POINTLESS CIRCULAR REASONING.
ONE STRIKE FROM KIYOTAKA IS ALL IT WILL TAKE TO BRING IT TO RUIN.
...IT'S THE FOUN-DATION.
AYUMU-KUN'S NEVER BELIEVED IN ANYTHING BEFORE.
KACHI (CLICK)
HE HASN'T BROUGHT ANYTHING WITH HIM THAT CAN SUPPORT HIS HEART UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.

HE'S ALREADY FOUND WHAT HE HAS TO BELIEVE IN.
BUT ...
...SOMETIMES THE SMALLEST THING CAN SUPPORT YOUR HEART.
THAT'S WHY HE WAS able TO SHAKE OFF HIZUMI, SEE?
Mabica
ダストダイヤ
アイク
ぼのぼのアイク

NO NEED TO TAG ALONG FOR THIS GRAVE TURN OF EVENTS.
YOU CAN SIT THIS ONE OUT.
THEN I WOULDN'T GET TO SEE THE HAPPY ENDING, NOW, WOULD I?
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
...YOU REALLY ARE...
...YOU'RE STILL SAYING THAT?
...STUPID, YOU KNOW THAT?

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR
THE ONLY SURE THING

...IT'S THE SAME THING HIZUMI SHOWED ME.
THAT'S MY BROTHER, ALL RIGHT.
HE'S QUICK.
TON (TAP)
HE SAVED ME THE TROUBLE OF EXPLAINING IT.
YOU'RE KIYOTAKA-SAN'S CLONE...
...AND YOUR NATURAL LIFE HAS BEEN CUT SHORT.
...IT FEELS LIKE I CAN ONLY ACCEPT THAT IT'S THE TRUTH.
BUT AFTER HEARING WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH TODAY...
...WHEN I FIRST READ IT, I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT...

...EITHER I KILL MY BROTHER OR...
...FORCE HIM TO SEE MY LOGIC AND FOLLOW IT.
ALL THAT'S LEFT...
...IS A FINAL SHOWDOWN BETWEEN ME AND MY BROTHER.
ONE THAT PUTS BOTH OF OUR EXISTENCES AND OUR REASONING ON THE LINE...
SO...
...IS THAT ALL THAT WAS IN THE ENVELOPE?
NO.
THERE WAS A SHORT LETTER TO ME AND...
KASA (RUSTLE)
...THIS.

KASA (RUSTLE)
IT HAS A DATE, TIME, AND PLACE ...
...AND ASKS THAT YOU COME ALONE.
NOT THAT I'D BRING ANYONE WITH ME AT THIS STAGE OF THE GAME.
A LETTER SUMMONING YOU.
I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCATION, BUT...
...HE WANTS YOU THERE AT ONE P.M. THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.
IF I KILLED MY BROTHER ...
...WOULD YOU FORGIVE ME?
PASA (FLIP)
.....
...SIS.

I MIGHT CRY A LITTLE, BUT...
...I'M SURE ...
...IF THAT'S WHAT KIYOTAKA-SAN WANTS...
...THEN I CAN'T REALLY BLAME YOU.
...I'D BE ABLE TO TELL YOU "WELL DONE."
...WHERE ALL HE CAN HOPE FOR IS TO DIE A LITTLE SOONER.
HE'S ALWAYS BEEN A PRISONER IN THE DARKNESS OF ISOLA-TION...
...HE'S A LOT LIKE HIZUMI-KUN.

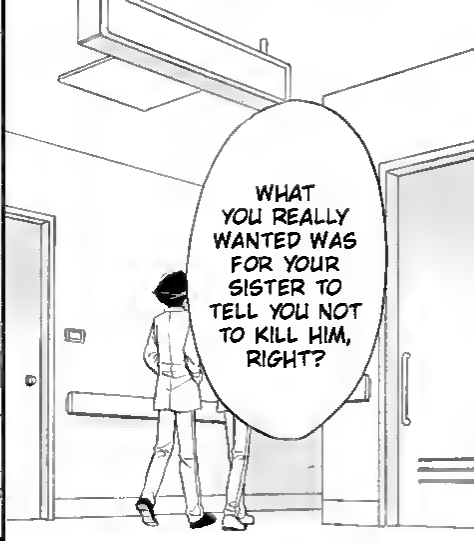
BUT MY BROTHER'S BOUND BY FATE AND CAN'T EVEN DIE OF HIS OWN FREE WILL.
UNTIL I KILL HIM...
...HE'LL ALWAYS BE ALONE.
...WHAT MY BROTHER WANTED MOST...
...WAS PROBABLY TO LIVE LIKE A NORMAL PERSON.
TO LAUGH LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE...
...AND CRY LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE...
...AND TO SHARE IT ALL WITH SOMEONE LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE DO...
IN THE COLD HEIGHTS OF DARKNESS, MY BROTHER...
...TRIED WITH ALL HIS MIGHT TO REACH DOWN TO THE WARMTH OF THE BONFIRE THAT EVERYBODY ELSE SEEMED TO BE GATHERED AROUND.
I'LL BET THOSE ARE THE KIND OF MISERABLE DAYS HE SPENT.
THAT'D MAKE ANYBODY WISH HE WAS DEAD.

I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL HE'S DONE.
...AND YET...
...I CAN'T LET MY BROTHER GET OFF SO EASY.
THEY WERE THE HANDS THAT KILLED YAIBA MIZUSHIRO...
...THE HANDS THAT MANIPULATED SO MANY LIVES AND MADE SO MANY SACRIFICES...
SOMETIMES HE LOOKED AS THOUGH THEY PAINED HIM, BUT...
...NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY THAT WAS.
...HE HAD THE COLDEST HANDS.
...AND YET THEY COULD NEVER GRAB HIS ONE TRUE DESIRE.
THEY WERE SUCH LONELY HANDS.

EVEN THOUGH I KNOW ALL THAT I DO ABOUT HIM NOW...
...IT'S NO GOOD.
...I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO HATE HIM.
EVEN THOUGH ALL I'D HAVE TO SAY...
...TO SUPPORT YOU IS, "I WOULDN'T FORGIVE YOU IF YOU KILLED KIYOTAKA-SAN"...
...I JUST CAN'T ...
...BRING MYSELF TO SAY IT.
...I KNOW.

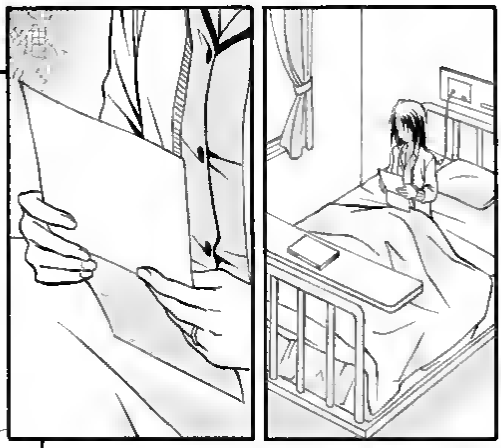
YOU'RE ON MY BROTHER'S SIDE, SIS.
I'D FEEL BAD FOR HIM IF YOU BETRAYED HIM NOW.
I ALREADY HAVE...
...YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME.
...WHAT I NEED TO FIGHT.

I'M NOT GETTING MY HOPES UP FOR ANYTHING.
THERE'S NO WAY MY BRO WOULD LEAVE AN OPENING FOR HER TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT.


WHAT YOU REALLY WANTED WAS FOR YOUR SISTER TO TELL YOU NOT TO KILL HIM, RIGHT?

DESPITE THAT, I...
...HAVE TO STAND UP.

LETTER: I'M SORRY, MADOKA. I'M SO SORRY.
ごめん、まどか。ごめん。



...For crying out loud.
PATA (PLOP)
PATA
PATA
After not writing for so long...
...he could've said a little more...

THE NEXT DAY
I KNOW IT'S HARDLY FITTING FOR ONE TO SPEND A RARE FREE DAY COOPED UP IN THE HOUSE, BUT...
WELCOME
...IT'S VERY UNLIKE YOU, NARUMI-SAN, TO GO OUT WITH THE EXCUSE OF NEEDING SOME NEW EARRINGS.
IT WAS AN IMPULSE.
I NEVER SAID YOU HAD TO COME ALONG.
CASH
SIGN: FEEL FREE TO MIX AND MATCH!
LIKE THESE OMINOUS LITTLE GUYS!
.....
WELL!
SINCE IT'S SUCH A RARE OPPORTUNITY, LET'S BUY A PAIR THAT REALLY MAKES AN IMPACT

BROOKES STATION
IF I WAS CONSIDERATE OF YOU, IT'D BE WAY TOO BORING.
WELL ...
... THAT'S TRUE, BUT...
... YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING.
I'M UNLUCKY ENOUGH AS IT IS. BE A LITTLE MORE CONSIDERATE.
...REJECTED.
AWW!
SU (PASS)
AH!
HOW ABOUT THESE, THEN?
HM, HOW ABOUT...

I THINK YOU SHOULD'VE GONE WITH THE SKULLS.
...YOU ONLY PICKED THOSE TO TEASE ME.
THAT'S ABSURD.
GEEZ ...
HAVE YOU BEEN GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?
YOU LOOK TIRED TO ME.
WELL...
...IT'S NOT EASY FOR ME TO FALL ASLEEP THESE DAYS.
I'M SCARED OF THIS BODY BEING ON THE BRINK OF BREAKING DOWN.
AND I'M DREADING THE FIGHT WITH MY BROTHER.

YOU WORKED SO HARD TO REASON OUT A PLAN TO SAVE EVERYONE.
THAT'S IMPRESSIVE!
...HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN YOURSELF FOR ONCE.
...I DON'T BELIEVE IT.
I BELIEVE IN YOU!
EVEN COMING FROM YOU...
HUH?
はぁ!?
...I'M RIGHT.
...I ONLY HOPE ...

BUT THAT'S ...
...WHAT THEY CALL FANTASY.
...YOU COULD EVEN CALL IT DELUSIONAL.
JUST SOUNDING CONFIDENT MAY HAVE A CERTAIN PERSUASIVE POWER, BUT...
...IT DOESN'T GUARANTEE THAT WHAT I'M DOING IS RIGHT.
OR THAT VICTORY COULD BE A MISTAKE.
EVEN IF I CAN'T GUARANTEE ANYTHING, DEFEATING MY BROTHER MIGHT BE GOOD IN ITS OWN RIGHT.
...MY REASONING MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO SAVE ANYBODY.

TO BE HONEST, I CAN'T TAKE IT.
I KEEP THINKING, WHAT IF I'D KILLED HIZUMI ON THE OBSERVATORY DECK...
...OR JOINED FORCES WITH HIM? MAYBE THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER.
MY HATRED TOWARD MY BROTHER'S IS SWIRLING AROUND LIKE MAD...
...BUT I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF ANYTHING GOOD IS COMING OUT OF MY ENDURING THAT.
THERE IS NOTHING CERTAIN ...
...INSIDE ME RIGHT NOW.
... EVEN SO...

...YOU LET HIZUMI-SAN WALK FREE...
...AND CONFIDENTLY TOLD EVERYONE THERE IS HOPE...
...AND YOU'RE READYING YOURSELF TO FACE YOUR BROTHER. WHY IS THAT?
WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IN? WHAT COULD BE PUSHING YOU TO DO THESE THINGS?
I HAVEN'T BELIEVED IN A SINGLE THING ALL THIS TIME.
MOSTLY AS A WAY TO PROTECT MYSELF.
SO IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME TO TRY AND BELIEVE IN SOMETHING NOW.
(RUSTLE)
...BUT...

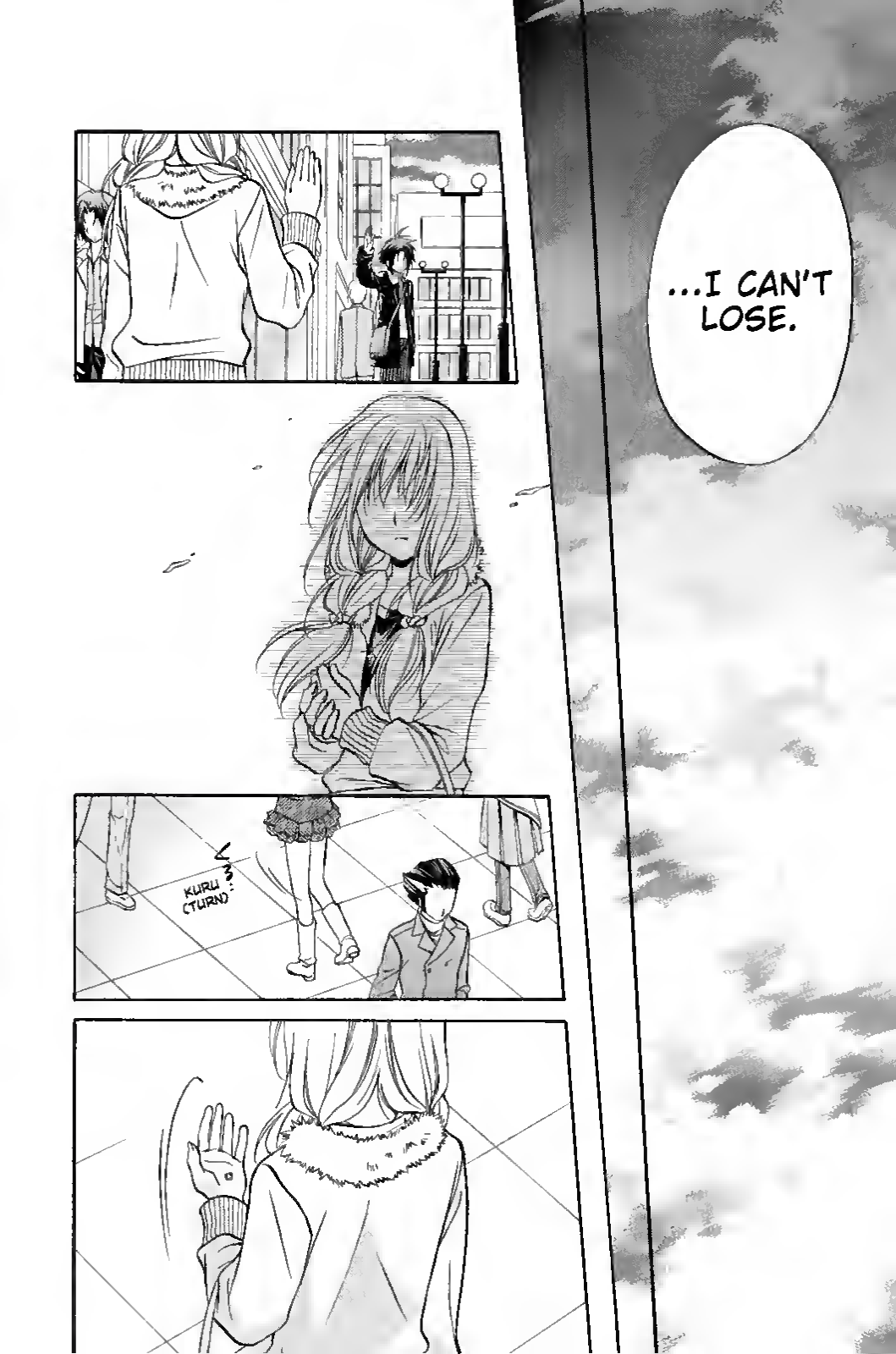
...IF I GIVE UP AT THIS POINT...
...I'LL LOSE EVERYTHING I EVER HAD WITH THE ONE WHO'S BELIEVED IN ME UNCONDITIONALLY ALL THIS TIME.
...
ACTUALLY
...

...FORGET I JUST SAID THAT.
HUH?
WH-WHY!?
WHEN YOU START ACTING LIKE YOU'RE GETTING THE WRONG IDEA, IT BOTHERS ME. SO I TAKE IT ALL BACK.
THAT WAS SUCH A GOOD DEVELOPMENT!
GOSO (RUSTLE)
BUT...!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, YOU STILL INSIST ON TEASING MY DELICATE FEELINGS!
DELICATE FEELINGS, RIGHT...
KORO (ROLL)
...YOU'RE GOING TO PUT THEM ON?
THE EARRINGS, I MEAN
YEAH.

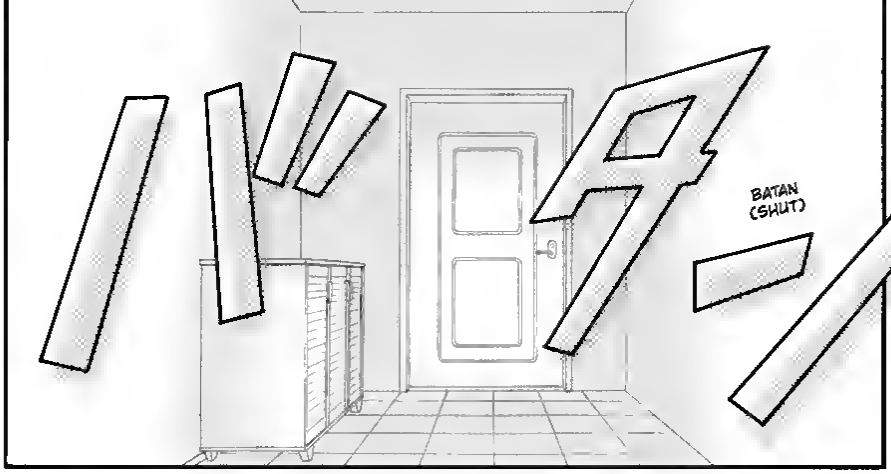
.....
?
GUI (YANK)
... NARUMI-SAN?
PON (PLOP)

HOLD ON TO THIS FOR ME.
PROMISE ME.
WHEN I DEFEAT MY BROTHER AND COME BACK...
...YOU'LL RETURN IT.

YOU BELIEVE IN THAT, RIGHT?
... YOU'LL COME BACK ...
... VICTORIOUS, WON'T YOU?
...Yes!
Of course!!
... THEN ...


...I CAN'T LOSE.
KURU (TURN)

...IT REALLY IS THE END.
...THIS MEANS ...
KYU (SQUEEZE)
GYU (TUG)


バタン
BATAN
(SHUT)

GOTON
ゴトン
GOTON
(KATHNK)

PUSHU
(SWISH)
TON
(TMP)

ZA
(SCUFF)

YOU'RE A TAD...
...EARLY GETTING HERE.

IT'S MY LAST READ BEFORE I DIE.
I'M ALMOST DONE, SO...
...BE PATIENT AND GIVE ME A SEC TO FINISH.
IT CAN'T BE YOUR LAST READ.
NUH-UH.
YOU'RE STILL GOT A LONG LIFE TO LIVE AFTER THIS, BRO.
PERA (FLIP)
YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME HERE.
YOU'RE A COG IN THE MACHINE I'VE CONSTRUCTED TO KILL MYSELF.

ZA (SCUFF)
KOTO (CLUNK)
PATAN (SHUT)
...AH WELL.
DYING AND LEAVING THE LAST PAGE UNREAD IS ALSO RATHER POETIC.
THAT'S A GOOD LOOK YOU HAVE ON...
...AYUMU.
BUT YOU STILL CAN'T FIGHT FATE.

...FINE BY ME.
FU (HEH)
I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU, BRO...
BUT I WON'T BE USING THIS.
YOU HAVE EQUIPPED YOURSELF WITH SOMETHING YOU CAN KILL ME WITH, RIGHT?
SU
...THAT MY FIRM WILLPOWER WILL BE MY REASONING.
NOW, THEN.
I WON'T USE IT.
SU (SWSH)
...YEAH.
GHA (CLACK)

I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU, BRO...
BUT I WON'T BE USING THIS.
YOU HAVE EQUIPPED YOURSELF WITH SOMETHING YOU CAN KILL ME WITH, RIGHT?
SU (SWISH)
...YEAH.
CHA (CLACK)
I WON'T USE IT.

...FINE BY ME.
FU CHEW
...THAT MY FIRM WILLPOWER WILL BE MY REASONING.
SU
NOW, THEN.

LET'S PUT AN END TO ...
...THIS TALE OF DESTINY.

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE
GOD'S BEAUTIFUL WORLD

...JUST BECAUSE YOU FULFILL YOUR GOAL, IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING...
...IT WON'T BRING YOU HAPPINESS.

...AYUMU...
...WHAT BELIEF HAS BROUGHT YOU HERE?
THOSE WHO DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING ARE ALWAYS ENVELOPED IN ANXIETY AND FEAR.
THEY'LL NEVER HAVE PEACE OF MIND.
EVERYBODY HAS TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING.
...LET'S STOP THAT ALREADY.
THAT'S NOT MY WEAPON HERE.

I'M NOT GOING TO KILL YOU, BRO.
I WON'T LET YOU ESCAPE INTO DEATH.
YOU'RE GOING TO CONTINUE ON IN THIS LONELY, LIVING HELL.
SO LISTEN TO ME, BRO!

PLAY THE PART...
...THAT I SHOW YOU!
I'LL TELL YOU...
...THE DETAILS OF MY LOGIC.
...JUDGING FROM THE DOCUMENTS I'VE SEEN...
...MY BODY WILL ONLY LAST FOUR MORE YEARS.
THE TOWER OF SALVATION THAT I'M ATTEMPTING TO BUILD.

BUT WHAT IF EVEN AFTER I DIE...
...I AM STILL ABLE TO GUARANTEE THAT THE BLADE CHILDREN WON'T BE KILLED?
AND IF I DIE WHILE THINGS REMAIN AS THEY ARE...
...ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN WILL BE KILLED.
BUT ISN'T THE ANSWER RIGHT THERE ON THE PLAYING FIELD?
OH REALLY?
THERE'S NO WAY IT CAN BE DONE.
THERE'S NO POINT WASTING THOUGHT ON THAT POSSIBILITY.
KIYOTAKA NARUMI...
...THE MOST POWERFUL PAWN OF ALL.

IF MY BROTHER WERE SO INCLINED ...
...HE COULD KEEP THE BLADE CHILDREN OUT OF HARM'S WAY NO MATTER HOW FANATICAL THE OPPOSITION.
HE HAS MORE THAN ENOUGH POWER TO PULL THAT OFF.
I CAN'T NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT.
I'M GOING TO MAKE MY BROTHER PROTECT THE CHILDREN FROM HERE ON.
AND JUST LIKE THAT, THE PROBLEM WILL BE SOLVED.
...YOU'RE SAYING YOU'RE GOING TO USE KIYOTAKA ...?

THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN—
YES, I CAN.
MY BROTHER'S PLAN HAS SUCCEEDED FLAWLESSLY SO FAR.
THIS WHOLE SCENARIO HAS PLAYED OUT EXACTLY AS HE BELIEVED IT WOULD.
BUT WHAT IF IN THE VERY END...
...HIS CONVICTION WAS KNOCKED DOWN?
IF HE WERE BETRAYED BY HIS OWN CONVICTION ...
...WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW A NEW PATH BASED ON THE REASONING THAT SHATTERED HIS CONVICTIONS.
HE WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW ANOTHER DESTINY.
...LIKE HIZUMI.
I'M GOING TO CRUSH MY BROTHER'S PLANS...
...AND MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT'S CONTROLLING THE BOARD ISN'T HIS REASONING ...
...BUT MY REASONING.

S-
SURE, IF YOU COULD DO THAT, YOU'D BE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF KIYOTAKA, BUT...
...WHAT ABOUT AFTER-WARD?
JUST BECAUSE THE BLADE CHILDREN GET TO LIVE LONGER DOESN'T MEAN THAT YAIBA'S CURSE WILL BE LIFTED, DON'T YOU SEE!?
THAT'S WHY I SAID THAT THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN SAVE THEM-SELVES.
GIVEN THE CHANCE TO LIVE LONGER, THEY CAN FIGHT THEIR DESTINIES.
YAIBA'S CURSE WAS A PERSONAL PROBLEM FOR THE BLADE CHILDREN TO BEGIN WITH.
THEY CAN EITHER STAND UP AGAINST IT...
...OR DO NOTHING AND LET THE CURSE DEFEAT THEM.
EITHER SCENARIO IS A CHOICE.

I'M SURE YOU'RE SCARED...
...RUTHERFORD.
NEVER KNOWING IF YOU'LL SUDDENLY NO LONGER BE YOURSELF ...
BUT GIVEN THE CHANCE TO LIVE LONGER...
SO...
AND THINKING HOW YOU'LL HAVE TO LIVE ON, BATTLING THAT FEAR UNTIL YOU DIE...
...IT PROBABLY SEEMS LIKE JUST GIVING IN TO FATE WOULD BE AN EASIER WAY OUT.
...YOU KNOW THAT YOU COULDN'T SO EASILY STAND DOWN AND MISS YOUR OPPORTUNITY.
...FIGHT.

FIGHT AGAINST THE CURSE THAT'S TRYING TO CHANGE YOU...
...AND TAME BY YOUR OWN WILLPOWER ...
...THE HEART THAT SEEKS ONLY DESTRUCTION.
OF COURSE I'M NOT GOING TO SEND THE BLADE CHILDREN TO CONFRONT THEIR FATE AND THEN ABANDON YOU.
I'M GOING TO PROVE TO YOU...
...THAT YOU CAN OVERCOME DESTINY BY YOUR OWN STRENGTH OF WILL.
I'M DESTINED TO DIE BEFORE I'M TWENTY YEARS OLD...
...BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE DYING THAT YOUNG.
THESE HANDS, THESE LEGS, THIS MOUTH ...
EVEN IF THEY ALL STOP WORKING ...
...I'M NOT GOING TO DIE WHEN FATE DECIDES.

...NO MATTER WHAT, I'M GOING TO WIN AND SHOW THEM ALL.
...WILL BE PROOF THAT YOU CAN OVERCOME FATE.
MY SURVIVAL ...
(GU (CLENCH)
...I'M GOING TO OVERCOME MY LIMITS.
USING MY WILL AND STRENGTH ...
WITH THAT IN MIND, DON'T YOU THINK THAT THE BLADE CHILDREN, WITH THEIR COMBINED STRENGTH AND FRIENDSHIPS ...
...CAN NOW OVERCOME FATE BY THEIR OWN DETER-MINATION?

BUT EVEN IF YOU GET THAT FAR, WHAT'S THE POINT IN US LIVING LONGER?
...WE'LL COMMIT ABOMINABLE MURDERS.
THERE'S A CHANCE THAT DOWN THE LINE...

...BESIDES...
...WE'VE ALREADY COMMITTED CRIMES SO UNSPEAKABLE THAT WE CAN'T COMPLAIN EVEN IF WE'RE KILLED.
AFTER ALL OF YOUR SACRIFICES, I DON'T SEE ANY VALUE IN OUR LIVING—
I DO.
AFTER THIS...
...WHEN PEOPLE MAKE MISTAKES...
...AND ARE ON THE VERGE OF RUIN...
...THOSE WHO WILL BE ABLE TO SAVE AND GUIDE THEM...
...AREN'T GOOD-NATURED PEOPLE WITH PERFECTLY-WHITE, UNSOILED HANDS...
...THEY'RE PEOPLE LIKE YOU BLADE CHILDREN.

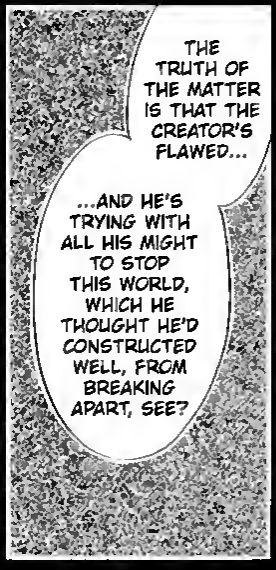
NOBODY IN THIS WORLD IS PERFECT.
PEOPLE MAKE MISTAKES ...
...AND HATE HAVING TO ADMIT THEM.
SOMETIMES THEY CAUSE SITUATIONS BEYOND REPAIR.
THE ONES WHO UNDER-STAND THEM ...
...HELP THEM...
...AND OFFER A GUIDING HAND...
...MAY BE NATURAL-BORN SINNERS, BUT...
...THEY'RE SINNERS WHO HAVE ALREADY OVERCOME THOSE SAME PROBLEMS WITH THEIR OWN STRENGTH, SEE?
...THOSE WHO NEVER MAKE MISTAKES ...
...AND NEVER DOUBT THEM-SELVES ...
...CAN BE PRETTY HEART-LESS TOWARD OTHERS.
ONLY THOSE WHO MESS UP...
...AND HONESTLY THINK THAT THEY'VE ERRED IN THEIR WAYS...
...ARE CAPABLE OF UNDERSTAND-ING OTHERS' PAIN AND CAN FIND WAYS TO HELP THEM.

...BUT IF EVEN ONE PERSON...
... BECOMES THE SALVATION OF THE MAJORITY ...
...THEN THAT MUST MEAN SOME-THING.
YOU CAN'T KNOW WHEN IT'LL HAPPEN...
...AND MANY OF YOU MIGHT LOSE HEART BEFORE IT DOES...
HEH...
...I THINK...
...YOU BLADE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN GIVEN A MAJOR ROLE IN SAVING THIS WORLD.
...THAT'S FANTASY TALK.

ARE YOU SAYING THAT IN ORDER TO SURVIVE THE UNFORESEEN HARDSHIPS THAT COULD AFFLICT THIS WORLD...
...WE WERE BORN...
...BROUGHT TOGETHER...
...AND MADE TO FIGHT?
IT'S WAY BETTER THAN THINKING THAT SOME CREATORS OR WHOEVER DID IT OUT OF SPORT, RIGHT?

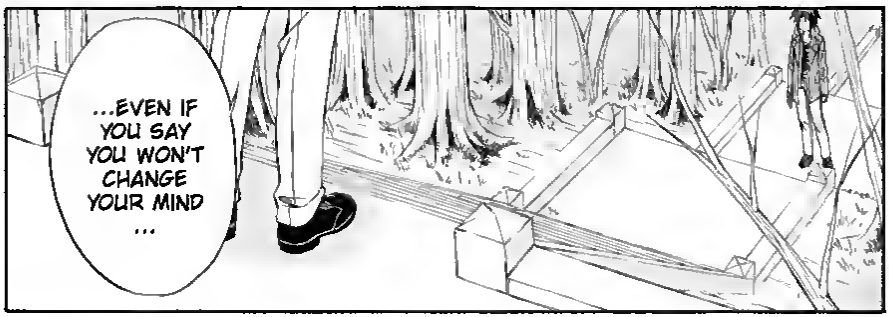
SOME ALMIGHTY BEING MIGHT JUST BE A FIGMENT OF OUR IMAGINATIONS.

THAT'S WHERE THE KINDLING OF HOPE LIES.
IT'S ME AND MY BROTHER...
...YAIBA AND HIZUMI...
...AND THE BLADE CHILDREN.


THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT THE CREATOR'S FLAWED...
...AND HE'S TRYING WITH ALL HIS MIGHT TO STOP THIS WORLD, WHICH HE THOUGHT HE'D CONSTRUCTED WELL, FROM BREAKING APART, SEE?

ALL THE PIECES ON THE BOARD...
...ARE THE FOUNDATION OF THE MASSIVE TOWER OF SALVATION MEANT FOR THE DISTANT FUTURE...
...AND ARE IRRE-PLACEABLE.
THIS IS MY REASON-ING...
...THE HOPE I LEAVE YOU.
I'M...
...GOING TO FIGHT WITH THIS.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH HATE IS BURNING IN MY CHEST...
..I ABSOLUTELY WILL NOT KILL MY BROTHER.
BY DOING SO...

...FANTASY WILL BECOME CLOSER TO REALITY...
...HUH?
BRO...
...I PROMISE YOU I WON'T AIM THIS GUN AT YOU.
I'M NOT GOING TO CHANGE MY MIND!


...EVEN IF YOU SAY YOU WON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND ...

...THAT'S A VERY DANGEROUS REASONING YOU'VE CONCOCTED.
THERE'S NOTHING CERTAIN ABOUT IT.
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LONG YOU'LL LIVE.
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IF THE BLADE CHILDREN'S CURSE CAN BE BROKEN.
AND YOU DON'T KNOW IF, BY ALLOWING THE CHILDREN TO REMAIN ALIVE, THEY'LL SPARK A CRISIS THAT CAN'T BE QUELLED...
YOUR REASONING IS FILLED WITH UNCERTAIN-TIES LEFT AND RIGHT.
NOT UNLIKE A FANTASY, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?
I CAN SAY THAT YOUR FUTURE'S JUST AS UNCERTAIN.
YOU DON'T KNOW IF THE BLADE CHILDREN'S CURSE WILL BECOME REALITY OR NOT.
BUT THE RISK THE CHILDREN POSE HAS ALREADY BEEN PROVEN.
I'D RELY ON THAT FAR MORE THAN I WOULD YOUR REASONING.
...YOU CAN'T BELIEVE IN YOUR OWN REASONING.
YOU MUST RECOGNIZE BY NOW THAT IT'S COMPLETELY DELUSIONAL.

YOU ONLY WANT IT TO BE TRUE...
...AS YOU STRUGGLE TO KEEP YOUR FOOTING ON THIS UNCERTAIN GROUND.
...I STAND ON THIS GROUND KNOWING HOW UNCERTAIN IT IS.
SO ONE SMALL BLOW'S NOT ABOUT TO KNOCK ME DOWN.
INDEED.
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO UNCERTAIN TERRITORY, A HEART WITHOUT SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN CAN'T STAND FIRM ON ITS OWN.
IT NEEDS SOMETHING, ANYTHING, TO HOLD IT UP.
AS SOON AS I TAKE THAT FROM YOU...
...YOU'RE FINISHED.

ZA (RUSTLE)
I WONDER WHAT IT IS EXACTLY ...
...THAT'S HOLDING YOU UP NOW.
BASA (FLAP)
BASASA
THAT PIGTAILED GIRL...

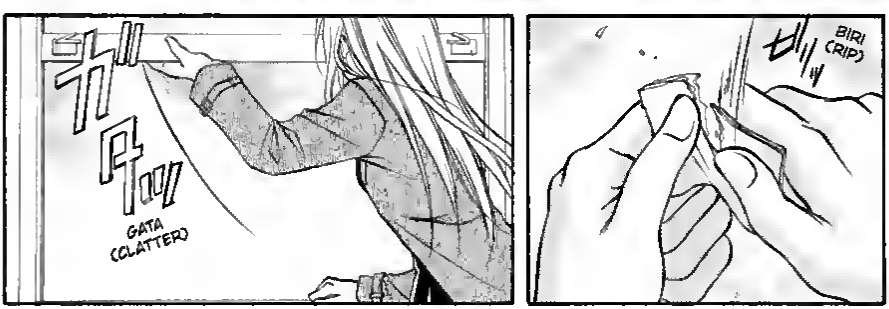
...WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER?
AM I WRONG?
...HIYONO YUIZAKI," IS IT?
...SO THAT'S ...
...HER NAME.
WHAT ABOUT HER?
SHE'S WHAT HOLDS UP YOUR SPIRIT.
SHE'S THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW.

DON'T LOOK SO SCARY.
I WOULDN'T DO SOMETHING SO POINTLESS AS KILL HER, NOW, WOULD I?
EVEN IF SHE DIED...
...THE FACT THAT SHE BELIEVED IN YOU WOULDN'T CHANGE.
YOU'D STILL BE ABLE TO STAND BASED ON THAT.
IF YOU WERE BEATEN ...
...THEN IT'D BE A MAJOR BETRAYAL ...
...OF ALL THE TIME AND ENERGY SHE PUT INTO YOU.
SO LONG AS YOU HOLD ON TO THE TIMES WHERE SHE HAD FAITH IN YOU...
...YOU WON'T LOSE HEART.
NOT EVEN I CAN STEAL AWAY ALL THE TIME YOU TWO HAVE SPENT TOGETHER.
EVEN IF YOU LOST EVERYTHING, THAT ALONE WOULD REMAIN.
SO WITH HER AS YOUR SUPPORT YOU'RE INVINCIBLE, IN A WAY.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE IN HER SUPPORT THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO APPROACH ME SO BRAVELY.

THAT'S WHY I...
...PLANTED SOMETHING AHEAD OF TIME TO STEAL THAT AWAY.
ZANA (CHILL)
...WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?
HOW COULD SOME GIRL SHOW UP AT YOUR SIDE AND BE SO VITALLY CONVENIENT THROUGHOUT ALL OF THIS?
SHE RISKED HER VERY LIFE TO HELP YOU OUT, REMEMBER?
THINK ABOUT IT.
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT SUCH MIRACULOUS STROKES OF LUCK HAPPEN OUT OF COINCIDENCE?

AND I AR-RANGED FOR A GIRL...
"HIYONO YUIZAKI" ...
...TO MERELY PLAY THAT PART.
...IS A CHARACTER I CON-STRUCTED.

PAPER: INDENTIFICATION / GRADE: SECOND YEAR CLASS A / NAME: HIYONO YUIZAKI



BAA (FWAP)
HIYONO YUIZAKI DOESN'T EXIST.
"STAY BY HIS SIDE THROUGH THICK AND THIN, BELIEVING IN HIM AND SUPPORTING HIM."
I INSTRUCTED HER TO BEHAVE THAT WAY AND SENT HER TO YOU...
SHE WAS A FAKE.
GUSHA (CRUSH)

I CREATED IT ALL...
...AND PRESENTED THAT ILLUSION TO YOU.
"HIYONO YUIZAKI" ...
...HER FAITH IN YOU...
...AND THE MEMORIES YOU SHARED WITH HER.
PA (DROP)
POTO (PLOP)
...IT WAS ALL AN ILLUSION ...
... AYUMU.
WITH A WAVE OF MY HAND...
... EVERY-THING DIS-APPEARS ...
...WITHOUT A TRACE.

THIS IS THE EARRING YOU LEFT WITH HER.
BUT THE GIRL YOU MADE THAT PROMISE TO DOESN'T EXIST.
THERE WON'T BE ANYBODY WAITING FOR YOU TO COME HOME TRIUMPHANT.
KIN (CLINK)
HYU (TOSS)
KO (TAP)
THAT GIRL WHO SUPPORTED YOU WAS AN IMAGINARY CHARACTER I CAME UP WITH.

THOSE WHO BELIEVE ...
...AND POSSESS THINGS THAT CAN'T BE TAKEN FROM THEM ARE INVINCIBLE.
BUT WHEN YOU'RE WITHOUT THOSE THINGS, YOU ARE DONE FOR.
I GAVE IT TO YOU...
...SO THAT AT THIS VERY MOMENT ...
SO I GAVE YOU SOMETHING TO THINK OF IN THAT WAY.
YOU SAID SO YOURSELF.
"IF I WERE BETRAYED BY MY OWN CONVICTION ...
...I WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW ANOTHER DESTINY."

...I COULD TAKE IT AWAY.
AYUMU...
TON (TMP)
...DO YOU THINK THIS IS SOMETHING A HUMAN HEART COULD CONCOCT?
A PLAN THAT WARM HANDS COULD BREATHE LIFE INTO?
I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU...
...I'M SCARED MYSELF.
SCARED OF A HEART THAT COULD WORK OUT A PLAN LIKE THAT...
...AND OF THE HANDS THAT WOULD BRING IT TO LIFE.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW EAGERLY I'VE AWAITED ...
...THE DAY I COULD BE FREED FROM SUCH TERRIBLE THINGS.
...NEITHER WITHIN YOU NOR WITHOUT YOU...
...NOTHING ACTUALLY EXISTS.
TON (TMP)
WHAT IS IT YOUR BAT-TERED HEART...
...WANTS TO DO NOW?
WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL?
EVERY-THING WAS A FARCE CREATED BY ME.
ZA! (SCUFF)

SU (SWSH)
AYUMU NARUMI ...
...UNLESS YOU KILL ME NOW...
...YOUR HEART WILL NEVER BE STABLE AGAIN.
GATA
GATA (SHAKE)

GA
(SHOVE)
NI
(SMILE)
KI
(GLARE)

KI
(GLARE)

GA
(SHOVE)
NI
(SMILE)

BASA
(FLAP)
PAAN
(BLAM)

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX
GENTLY STICK A FEATHER IN YOUR CAP

KO
CLACK
...THAT SONG...
WHAT WAS THE TITLE AGAIN?
LET ME THINK ...
KO
AH, YES.
...IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN ...

...IT'S "THE BLESSINGS OF GOD...
...IN SOLITUDE" ...
BASA (FLAP)
BASA
BASA
BASA

...AYUMU...
...WHY DID YOU PURPOSELY MISS...?
...EVEN IF I REGRET THIS LATER...
...IT WON'T BE LIKE HOW I USED TO REGRET THINGS.
...BRO...

...DO YOU STILL HAVE A TRUMP CARD?
...WHAT IF I SAID I DID?
YOU DON'T.
YOU NEATLY PLANNED OUT EVERYTHING SO THAT "HIYONO YUIZAKI" WOULD BE YOUR DEFINITIVE STRIKE.
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE ANOTHER CARD UP YOUR SLEEVE JUST IN CASE.
YOU'RE NOT ONE TO MAKE SUCH UGLY PRE-CAUTIONS.
...BESIDES...
TA (TMP)

...AS FOR HOW YOU'D MANIPULATE ME NOW...
SU (PASS)
...YOU HAVEN'T PREPARED ANY REASONING TO SPEAK OF, BRO.
SO...
...I WIN.
...BRO...

...FOLLOW MY LINE OF REASONING.
PROTECT THE BLADE CHILDREN ...
...AND BE AS MUCH HELP TO THEM AS YOU CAN BE.
OF THE CHILDREN, THERE MIGHT BE SOME WHO WILL STILL HAVE TO BE KILLED, THOUGH.
ZA (SCUFF)
BUT AS LONG AS THE MAJORITY OF THEM CAN FIGHT TO OVERCOME THE CURSE, THEN...
...I THINK THAT...
...MAKES IT ALL WORTH IT.

...
AYUMU.
...WHY ARE YOU LETTING ME OFF?
YOU DIDN'T HAVE FAITH IN YOUR OWN REASONING, DID YOU?
NOT REALLY. ALL I CAN DO IS HOPE THAT MY THEORY IS RIGHT.
AND YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE IN "HIYONO YUIZAKI" TO BEGIN WITH EITHER?
NO.
I ALREADY KNEW EVERYTHING YOU SAID WAS TRUE, BRO.
YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT "HIYONO YUIZAKI" WAS ONLY FOLLOWING MY ORDERS?

GUESSING AT YOUR LAST POSSIBLE STRIKE...
...I PREDICTED THAT "HIYONO YUIZAKI" WOULD SERVE AS YOUR FINAL BLOW.
FOR OVER A WEEK, YEAH.
KNOWING WHAT WAS COMING, I WAS ABLE TO REMAIN CALM.
SIGH...
...SO EVERYTHING UP TO THIS POINT WAS AN ACT.
I WOULDN'T SAY THAT.
IT REALLY HIT HOME.
I FELT I WAS BARELY HANGING ON.

...“HIYONO YUIZAKI” WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU THAN ANYONE.
BUT...
I TOLD YOU.
I’D FORESEEN THAT OUTCOME ALREADY.
KNOWING WHAT WAS COMING, IT WAS BOUND TO WORK OUT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
BUT...
HOW ARE YOU ABLE TO ENDURE SUCH A BETRAYAL?
EVEN IF LOGIC TOLD YOU SHE WAS GUILTY...
...I PLANTED DOUBTS TO MAKE YOU REJECT THE TRUTH DEEP DOWN.
...EVEN IF YOU WERE ABLE TO PREDICT IT...
...I SET UP EVERYTHING SO YOUR HEART COULDN’T TAKE THE BLOW.

...WHAT'S YOUR HEART GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW?
THE WORLD AROUND YOU HAS BEEN REVEALED TO BE A COMPLETE LIE.
YOU'VE LOST ALL SUPPORT, BOTH ABOVE AND BELOW YOU.
SO HOW CAN YOU STILL STAY SO SANE?
IN THAT BOTTOMLESS PIT OF CHAOS AND DARKNESS...
...WHAT IS IT...
... HOLDING YOU UP NOW?

SORRY, BUT THAT'S...
HYU (WHIP)
!!
FU (HEH)
...A TRADE SECRET.
PASHI (CATCH)
.....
...SO THIS IS DESTINY TOO.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, TRY TO CHANGE IT.
I'LL TAKE YOU ON...
...ANY-TIME.
I DON'T WANT TO CARRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS AGAIN IF I CAN HELP IT.
SU (CLIFT)
HERE.
GET RID OF THIS FOR ME.

...
SURE.
AND GO APOLOGIZE TO MADOKA RIGHT AWAY.
...I'LL HAVE TO BE READY FOR TWO OR THREE BROKEN BONES.
YEAH, WELL ...
...THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED, RIGHT?
...
YEAH.

GU SQUEEZE
AND THEN COME HOME.
TA (TMP)
...ARE YOU SURE THIS ISN'T ACTUALLY HOW YOU WANTED IT TO TURN OUT?
...BRO...

...YOUR LOGIC...
...IS PERFECTLY BEAUTIFUL.
BUT IF IT'S BEEN COMING FROM...
...SOMEBODY BLESSED AND CONTENT, IT'S BEEN NOTHING MORE THAN HOT AIR.
IT CAN'T MOVE ANYBODY INTO ACTION.
TO AFFECT PEOPLE...
...IT HAS TO COME FROM SOMEONE MISFORTUNATE...
...WHO CAN SMILE HONESTLY EVEN IN THE FACE OF A CRUEL FUTURE.
I'VE NEVER KNOWN SOMEONE LIKE THAT.
EVEN IF I KNEW SOMEONE LIKE THAT COULD SAVE EVERYONE ...
...I COULDN'T BELIEVE SUCH A PERSON EXISTED.

...TURNS OUT I...
...WAS BEING PULLED BY YOUR STRINGS RIGHT UP TO THE VERY END, EH?
BUT NOW...
...I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BELIEVE.
...
AYUMU.
IT'S NO USE TRYING TO FLATTER ME.
I'M DROWNING IN DEFEAT RIGHT NOW.

DO YOU STILL HATE ME?
TSUKA (STOMP)
TSUKA
ZA (SKLIFF)

BAKI
(CRACK)

...YOU KNOW HOW TO MAKE UP FOR YOUR CRIMES, RIGHT?
IN THAT CASE, I'M THROUGH WITH HATING YOU.
SAWA (RUSTLE)
SAWA
TAN
TAN (TMP)
.....

KO (GRRR...)
KACHIN (CLICK)
GACHA (CLACK)!
...A MISFIRE, HUH?

I GUESS I REALLY CAN'T DIE.
GACHA (CLACK)
NOW, THEN.
THE REAL STRUGGLE STARTS NOW.
GOSO (STUFF)
I HAVE TO REINSTATE THE ORGANIZATION...
...SUPPRESS THE EXTREMISTS ...
...AND GET TOGETHER A SPECIAL MEDICAL TEAM FOR AYUMU.
ZA (RUSTLE)
ZA

...AHH.
DAMMIT.
IT'S SO...
...COLD HERE.
ZAWA (RUSTLE)
ZAWA

...WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?

IF I'D GIVEN IN TO MY BROTHER ...
...I'D BE KILLING YOU RIGHT NOW.
...DID YOU WIN...
...AGAINST KIYOTAKA NARUMI?
SU (SWSH)
I PROMISED I'D COME BACK VICTORIOUS, REMEMBER?
I'M SURE YOU ALREADY KNOW THIS, BUT...

I WAS ASKED BY MR. KIYOTAKA NARUMI...
...TO PLAY THE ROLE OF "HIYONO YUIZAKI" ...
...A CHARACTER HE FABRICATED HIMSELF.
OF COURSE, "HIYONO YUIZAKI" IS NOT MY REAL NAME.
I AM NOT ACTUALLY SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD.
AND I DIDN'T ENROLL AT TSUKIOMI HIGH THROUGH THE USUAL PROCEDURE.
...BUT IF I MAY EXPLAIN MYSELF...
ALTHOUGH MR. KIYOTAKA GAVE ME NECESSARY INFORMATION FROM TIME TO TIME...
...THOSE INVOLVED ...
...AND THE PROBLEMS THAT CAME ABOUT...
...AND THE DETAILS OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS WERE NOT TOLD TO ME.
WHEN THE OCCASION DEMANDED IT...
...I'D USE MY OWN JUDGMENT ...
...TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO STAND UP AGAINST MR. KIYOTAKA.

...I DIDN'T KNOW THAT "HIYONO YUIZAKI" WOULD BE THE ONE TO GIVE YOU YOUR GREATEST DESPAIR IN THE VERY END.
UNTIL THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST, WHEN I RECEIVED A SPECIAL MISSION FROM MR. KIYOTAKA NARUMI...
...SINCE I READILY HANDED OVER THE EARRING YOU'D ENTRUSTED ME WITH TO HIM...
... THOUGH I SAY THIS NOW...
... THAT'S NO DIFFERENT FROM ME BETRAYING YOU.
PASHI (CATCH)
I DUPED YOU TOO...
...SO WE'RE EVEN.
PON (TOSS)
I FIGURED MY BROTHER NEEDED CLEAR PROOF THAT YOU WOULD SERVE AS THE FINAL BLOW.
NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE.
I GAVE IT TO YOU EXPECTING THAT.

AND I DIDN'T CARE WHO YOU REALLY WERE.
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH...
...I CARED SO LITTLE THAT I'D FORGOTTEN WHAT YOUR NAME WAS UNTIL MY BROTHER TOLD ME IT WAS "HIYONO YUIZAKI."
...KUSU (CHUCKLE)
...THAT'S SO MEAN.
I KNOW.
I'M MEAN LIKE THAT.
ZA (RUSTLE)
ZA

WHAT EXACTLY IS IT THAT HOLDS YOU UP...
...AND ENABLES YOU TO STAND IN THIS DARKNESS?
...HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO WIN AGAINST MR. KIYOTAKA NARUMI?
THERE WAS NOTHING I WAS CERTAIN OF.
JUST MY STUBBORN PRIDE.
IT'S NOT LIKE I TAPPED SOME PROFOUND LOGIC OR ENLIGHTEN-MENT.
IT WAS ALL I COULD DO TO KEEP FROM CRUMBLING INTO A SOBBING MESS.
...I JUST MADE UP MY MIND TO STAND FIRM...
...AND SOMEHOW OR OTHER IT ALL WORKED OUT.

ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?
...DID YOU ACHIEVE SOMETHING, THEN?
...WELL...
IF I HAD TO SAY...
...GOOD QUES-TION...
.....
...I GUESS I GOT THROUGH IT WITHOUT MAKING YOU CRY.

IF I'D KILLED MY BROTHER ...
.....
...I THOUGHT FOR SURE IT'D MAKE YOU SAD.
...IT'S BECAUSE I BELIEVED YOU, IF ANYONE, WOULD WIN FOR ME...
...AND I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU LIKE THIS WITHOUT ANY MORE LIES...
...THAT I GAVE MR. KIYOTAKA THE EARRING.
...IF I TELL YOU THAT...
...WILL YOU BELIEVE ME?
TON (TAP)
DIDN'T I TELL YOU?
I DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING.

Yes.
That's the "Narumi-san" I know.
ZA (RUSTLE)
BUT...
YEAH.
LOOKS LIKE IT.
...THIS IS STILL GOOD-BYE, ISN'T IT?

I HAVE TO SMILE IN THE FACE OF DESPAIR.
I KNOW I WOULD PROBABLY ONLY GET IN YOUR WAY, SO—
AFTER THIS, YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOW THE BLADE CHILDREN ...
...THAT NO MATTER HOW DISCOURAGING IT MAY BECOME, THEY CAN CHOOSE THEIR OWN DESTINY.
...I HAVE TO KEEP SAYING THAT IT'S WORTH IT TO HOLD ON TO HOPE.
EVEN IF I DIE AND LOSE EVERYTHING...
AND IT WOULDN'T HELP ME BE VERY PERSUASIVE.
BUT IF YOU WERE AROUND...
...THAT ALONE WOULD MAKE ME LOOK HAPPY.

SO THINGS CAN'T BE THE WAY THEY WERE JUST YESTERDAY.
...TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I'LL BE TAKING ON A NEW LONG-TERM MISSION STARTING TOMORROW ...
...AND WON'T BE ABLE TO BE WITH YOU ANYMORE.
IT'LL BE ABROAD.
AND I'LL BE BOUND TO IT FOR SEVERAL YEARS.
.....
...JUST WHAT...
...DO YOU DO FOR A LIVING?
THAT'S, YOU KNOW...
...A TRADE SECRET.
.....
PU (PFFT)
KU (CHEW)

...I GUESS WE WON'T BE SEEING EACH OTHER AGAIN.
SAWA (RUSTLE)
SAWA
...THIS MAY BE SELFISH OF ME, BUT...
BUT I ALSO THINK THAT'S FOR THE BEST.
QUITE POSSIBLY.
...IS IT OKAY IF I CASH IN ON YOUR PROMISE TO "HIYONO YUIZAKI" TO GRANT ME ONE WISH...?
IS IT OKAY IF I USE IT?

SURE.
AS LONG AS I CAN ACTUALLY DO IT.
SU (LIFT)
BEFORE WE SAY GOOD-BYE...
...SHAKE MY HAND.

...If that's all...
...I'd be glad to.
ZAA (RUSTLE)
FU (HOLD)

WELL, THEN...
...TAKE CARE.
YOU TOO.
DON'T BE TOO RECKLESS OUT THERE.
KYU (SQUEEZE)

PITA (PAUSE)
SU (PASS)
SA (STEP)
PON (PLOP)
!?
GUI (PULL)
WOULD YOU HOLD ON TO THIS FOR ME?
... OKAY ...?

IF WE EVER MEET AGAIN...
...THEN YOU CAN GIVE IT BACK.
...OKAY.
I PROMISE.
SAWA
SAWA
SAWA
(RUSTLE)

KUH!
UUH ...!
POTA (PLIP) ぽた
POTA ぽた

15
16 28
17
18 28
19
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22
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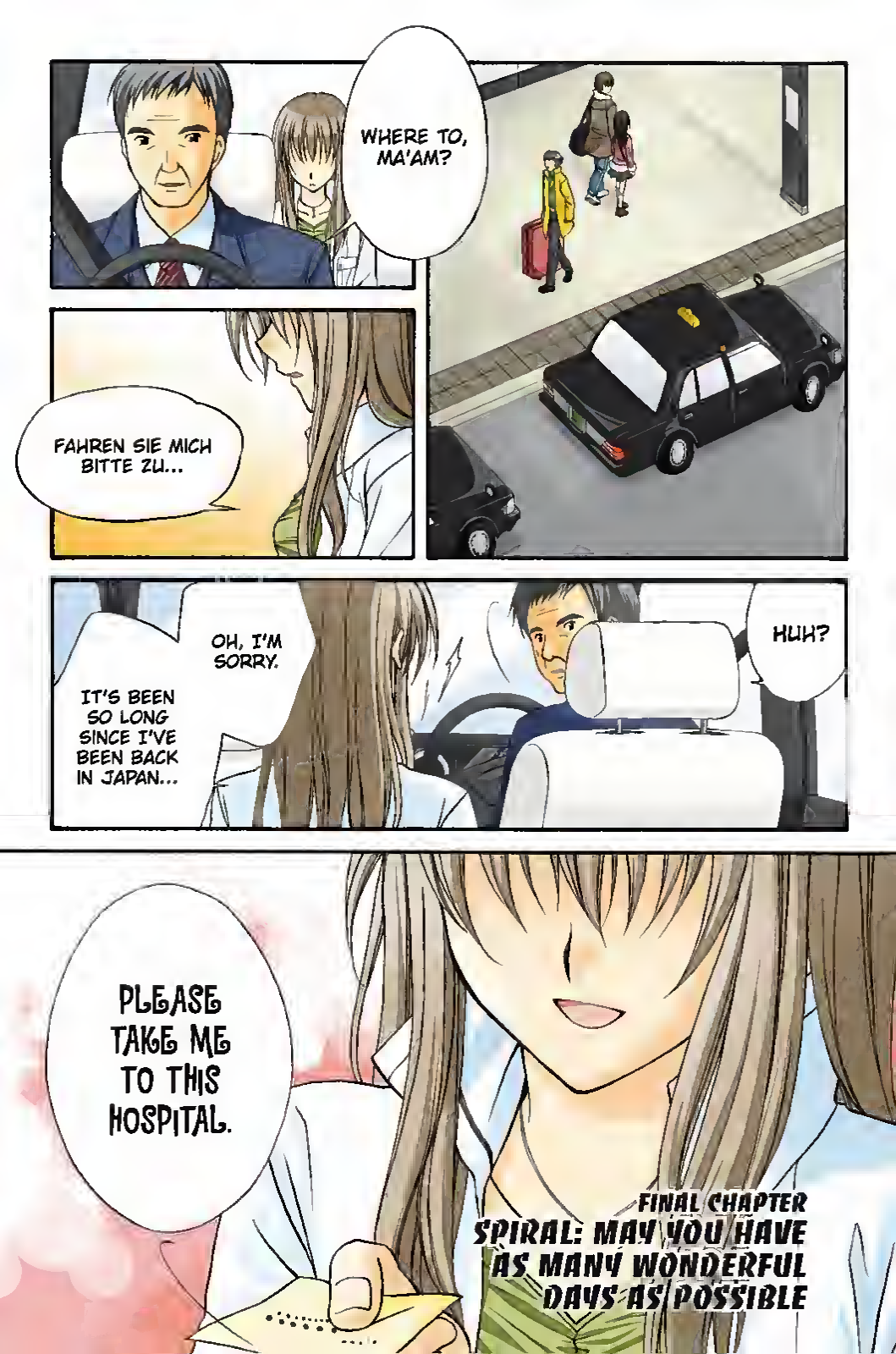
0
I'VE GOT OVER AN HOUR BEFORE THE NEXT TRAIN COMES.
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO KILL TIME IN THIS DESERTED STATION?
SAWA
SAWA (RUSTLE)
BUN (SHAKE)
BUN
...THIS PLACE...
...WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE FOR ME TO CRY IT ALL OUT.
GAN (BANG)

I HAVE A MOUNTAIN OF REGRET INSIDE, BUT...!
I'LL SHOW THEM ONE WAY OR ANOTHER...
...I STILL GOT SOMETHING BACK THROUGH IT ALL...
...THAT IT'S NOT ALL BAD.
...IF I CRIED NOW, I'M NOT SO SURE I'D BE ABLE TO HOLD UP MY HEAD AGAIN.
I'LL DO IT AFTER I'VE CALMED DOWN A LITTLE MORE.
KUI
GTURN

DOKA-
(THUMP)
NOW, THEN.
MY BRO'LL BE COMING BACK HOME TOO.
I WONDER WHAT I SHOULD MAKE...
...FOR TONIGHT'S SUPPER.

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL


WHERE TO, MA'AM?
FAHREN SIE MICH BITTE ZU...
OH, I'M SORRY.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE BEEN BACK IN JAPAN...
HUH?
PLEASE TAKE ME TO THIS HOSPITAL.
FINAL CHAPTER
SPIRAL: MAY YOU HAVE AS MANY WONDERFUL DAYS AS POSSIBLE

FINAL CHAPTER
SPIRAL: MAY YOU HAVE AS MANY WONDERFUL DAYS AS POSSIBLE

FINAL CHAPTER

SPIRAL: MAY YOU HAVE AS MANY WONDERFUL DAYS AS POSSIBLE

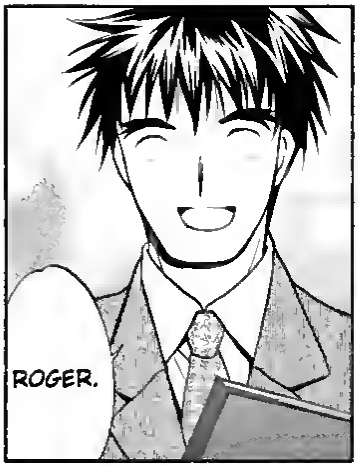
Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

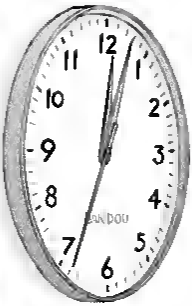
AFU (YAWN)
あふ…
KACHA (CLICK)
カチャ!
GOOD MORNING …
… MADOKA.
KOTO (CLACK)
コト
WE'VE MANAGED TO STAY TOGETHER FOR A LONG TIME IN SPITE OF EVERY-THING.
IT'S ALMOST SCARY, DON'T YOU THINK?
YEAH.
UH-HUH.
MORN-ING.

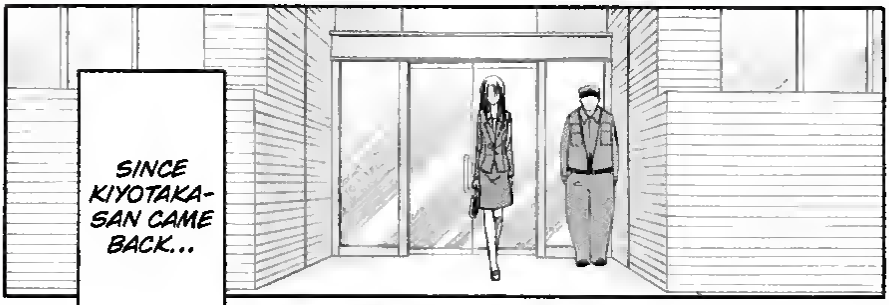
HEY.
IF A WIFE WON'T EVEN FORGIVE HER HUSBAND, WHO ELSE IS GOING TO?
OH YES.
IT'S LOVE!
SOMETHING ABOUT HOW YOU SAY THAT GETS ON MY NERVES.
BRRRING
BRRRING
BRRRING
IT'S ME.
...UH-HUH...
...I SEE.
I'LL CALL YOU BACK.
PI (BEEP)

HIZUMI MIZUSHIRO JUST BREATHED HIS LAST.
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
...OH.
THAT KID FOUGHT HARD.


ROGER.

WELL ...
...I'LL LEAVE THE REST TO YOU.



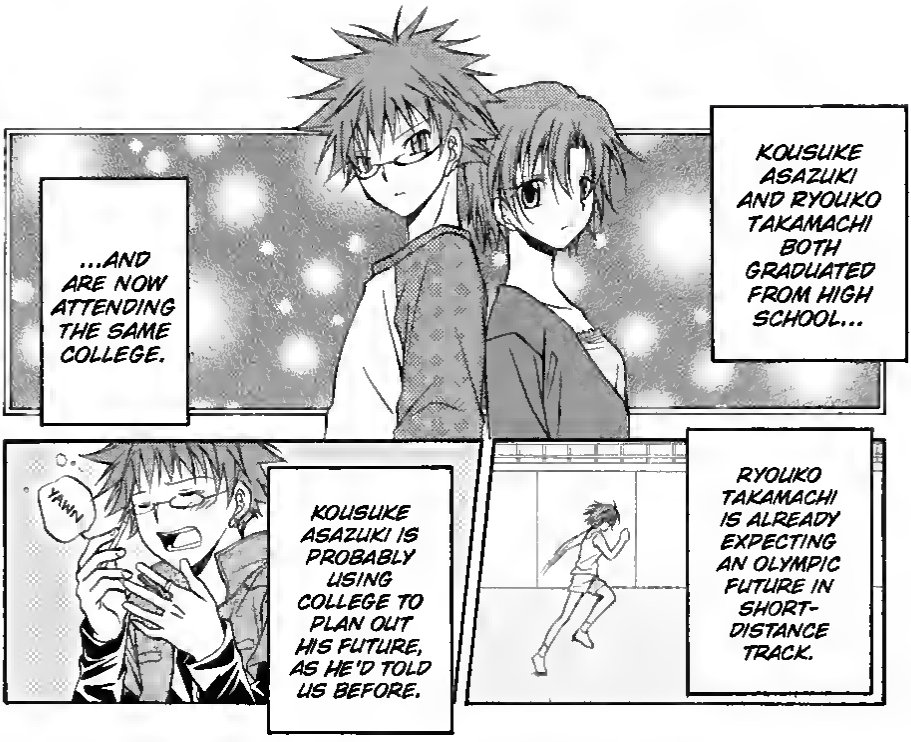

SINCE KIYOTAKA-SAN CAME BACK...

...AND HIS SHOWDOWN WITH AYUMU ENDED, BARELY TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED.

AND YET NOTHING'S CHANGED ALL THAT DRAMATI-CALLY.
THE DESTINY AYUMU CHOSE WAS NOT A CLOSED FATE.
UNLIKE THE DESTINY KIYOTAKA-SAN HAD TRIED TO BUILD, ONE THAT WAS LIKE A CLOSED CIRCLE...
PI (BEEP)
PI
PI
...AYUMU CHOSE WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL A SPIRALING DESTINY.
AND THAT'S HOW HE WON.

GU (PRESS)
A SPIRAL CAN FEEL CIRCULAR, BUT IT NEVER CLOSES AND WILL FOREVER HEAD TOWARD SOME POINT IN A ROUNDABOUT WAY.
BUROROROO (VROOOOM)
SO THE FRUITS THAT HIS CHOICE WILL BEAR...
...ARE STILL A LONG WAY OFF IN THE FUTURE.
...TO MAKE AYUMU'S CHOICE THE RIGHT ONE.
BUT ALREADY LOTS OF PEOPLE ARE LIVING THEIR LIVES...
RIO TAKEUCHI WAS DISCHARGED FROM THE HOSPITAL AND, AFTER VISITING AYUMU BRIEFLY, SOON DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL TO GO ABROAD.
SHE'S NOW INVOLVED IN REMOVING LAND MINES FROM TERRITORIES SUFFERING STRIFE AND CIVIL WAR.

...AND HAS SENT COUNTLESS PHOTOS TO AYUMU TO SHOW HIM.
EVEN NOW, SHE'S APPARENTLY TRAVELING ALL OVER THE PLACE...
EYES RUTHERFORD WAS IN TOUCH WITH KIRIE TSUCHIYA, AYUMU, AND THE SURVIVING BLADE CHILDREN UNTIL A YEAR AGO.
HE WAS OFFERING CONSTANT CONSULTATION AND ADVICE ON SOLVING THEIR PROBLEM.
...THE WAY HE'S SO VIGOROUSLY PERFORMING AROUND THE GLOBE.
IT'S LIKE THEY SAY ABOUT "MUSIC HEALING THE WORLD"...
BUT NOW HE'S DEVOTING HIMSELF TO THE PIANO AGAIN.
...UNLIKE BEFORE, SHE SEEMS TO TAKE PRIDE IN HER JOB NOW.
WHEN SHE CAME OVER EARLY ON, SHE WAS REALLY HARRIED AND COMPLAINED TO AYUMU THE WHOLE TIME, BUT...
KIRIE TSUCHIYA IS ACTING AS A LIAISON BETWEEN AYUMU AND THE BLADE CHILDREN.


KOUSUKE ASAZUKI AND RYOUKO TAKAMACHI BOTH GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL...
...AND ARE NOW ATTENDING THE SAME COLLEGE.
RYOUKO TAKAMACHI IS ALREADY EXPECTING AN OLYMPIC FUTURE IN SHORT-DISTANCE TRACK.
KOUSUKE ASAZUKI IS PROBABLY USING COLLEGE TO PLAN OUT HIS FUTURE, AS HE'D TOLD US BEFORE.
YAWN

THEY BOTH CAME TO AYUMU ONCE BEFORE TO TALK ABOUT THE PATHS THEY WERE GOING TO TAKE.
COME ON, AYUMU!
CONVINCE KOUSUKE FOR ME!
I WOULD, BUT I THINK GOING ON TO COLLEGE IS A GOOD MOVE.
YOU EVEN RECEIVED AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE TRACK TEAM RIGHT?
BUT...

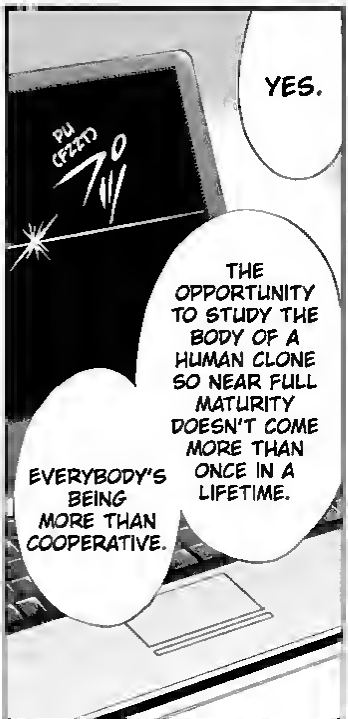
WE'LL BE WASTING OUR TIME STUDYING IN COLLEGE!
...WHILE RIO AND RUTHERFORD ARE OUT THERE PLAYING A HUGE ROLE IN SOCIETY...
...I DON'T SEE WHAT RUNNING SHORT-DISTANCE WILL AMOUNT TO.
I THINK THAT AS LONG AS YOU'RE LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE, TAKING YOUR TIME AND STUDYING IN COLLEGE HAS ITS MERITS.
YEAH, BUT...
...WE DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH TIME WE HAVE—
HA (GASP)

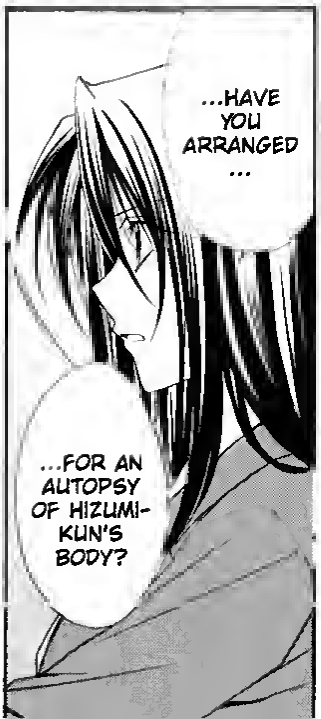
THEY WANT TO LEAVE THEIR MARK...
...BEFORE THEY SUCCUMB TO THE CURSE SOMEDAY.
...BUT IT'S LIKE THEY FEEL THIS SENSE OF URGENCY AND PANIC...
PON (PAT)
...RIO AND RUTHERFORD ARE DOING UPSTANDING THINGS, IT'S TRUE...
I'M TAKING MY TIME TO THINK ABOUT MY FUTURE.
BUT I HAVE NO INTENTION OF SUCCUMBING TO IT.
RIGHT?
ALL I SAID WAS FOR YOU TO MAKE YOUR OWN OPPOR-TUNITIES, REMEMBER?
DON'T ASK ME.
DON'T YOU THINK RYOUKO WOULD BE WASTING A PRECIOUS SKILL?

...I'M THE OLDEST OF THE BLADE CHILDREN WHO ARE STILL ALIVE.
THE CURSE WILL PROBABLY FALL ON ME NEXT.
THAT'S WHY...
...I WANT TO SHOW YOU WHILE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE...
...THAT THERE ARE STILL BLADE CHILDREN WHO WILL OVERCOME THE CURSE.
THAT WAY, WHEN YOU DO DIE, YOU'LL DIE WITHOUT ANY WORRIES, RIGHT?
DON'T JINX ME.

NOT LONG AFTER THAT, AYUMU COLLAPSED FROM ANEMIA FOR THE FIRST TIME.

ALREADY HIS BODY'S ABILITY TO GENERATE BLOOD CELLS WAS DECLINING.


PU (PZZT)
YES.
THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE BODY OF A HUMAN CLONE SO NEAR FULL MATURITY DOESN'T COME MORE THAN ONCE IN A LIFETIME.
EVERYBODY'S BEING MORE THAN COOPERATIVE.



THIS WAY AYUMU WILL BE GIVEN EVEN MORE TIME.
I HOPE IT'S NOT A TOTAL WASTE.
IT WON'T BE.
BECAUSE HE WAS A CLONE LIKE AYUMU...
AS A RESULT ...
...HIZUMI MIZUSHIRO HAD A BAD REACTION SIX MONTHS BACK AND FELL INTO A COMA.
FOLLOWING HIS SHOWDOWN WITH AYUMU...
...HIZUMI MIZUSHIRO VOLUNTARILY OFFERED HIMSELF AS A TEST SUBJECT FOR CLONING TREATMENTS.
...NEW MEDICINES AND TREATMENTS COULD BE TESTED AGAINST HIS BODY'S SYMPTOMS ...
...AND RISKY CLINICAL TESTS WERE PERFORMED.
THAT WAS THE PATH HE CHOSE.
HE FINALLY PASSED AWAY IN HIS SLEEP THIS MORNING.

A LONG LIFE FOR AYUMU SERVES AS HOPE FOR THE BLADE CHILDREN.
THANKS TO THEM, THE PROGRESS OF AYUMU'S SYMPTOMS HAS BEEN REMARKABLY CURBED...
...AND HE'S BEEN GIVEN A LITTLE MORE TIME TO LIVE.
BUT HIS SACRIFICES WEREN'T WITHOUT MEANING.
KIIIIIN (VWEEE)
HIZUMI MIZUSHIRO USED HIS OWN WILL TO ADD TO THAT HOPE.
PI (BEEP)
PI
PI

PATAN (SHLIT)
.....
SO HIZUMI MIZUSHIRO'S DEAD...
SW (STEP)
OOF! ALMOST GOT 'IM!
DAAH!
HAAAH! YAH!

BOFU (POOMF)
WELL?
WHAT'S UP...
You Lose!
AWW.
UWAH!
...RUTHERFORD?
JUDGING BY THE REPORTS FROM THE CLINICAL TESTS YOU'RE UNDERGOING...
...IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE YOU HAVE MUCH LONGER TO LIVE.
SO I FIGURED I'D SEE YOU AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE YOU GO.
THAT'S FINE, BUT...
...I'M NOT GONNA APOLOGIZE FOR ANYTHIN', OKAY?

IF YOU WERE PREPARED TO REPENT SO EASILY...
...YOU WOULDN'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO FACE WHAT'S STILL AHEAD.
THAT'S TOO BAD.
I'D MADE UP MY MIND THAT IF YOU DID, I'D STRANGLE YOU TO DEATH.
...YOU SAID IT.
...WHEN I DIE, WOULD YOU TELL AYUMU THIS FOR ME?
...OH YEAH...
...BY THE WAY...

TELL HIM, "GO WHEREVER IT IS YOU WANT TO REACH."
WHY WAIT UNTIL AFTER YOU'RE DEAD?
BECAUSE IF YOU TOLD HIM WHILE I'M STILL ALIVE...
...IT'D SOUND PHONY, YOU KNOW?
I HAVE TO GIVE HIM THAT MESSAGE NOW.
スッ
SUKKU (STAND)

PATA (PATTER)
PATA
PATA
PATA
PATA
...HUH?
EYES-KUN!?
HAA (SIGH)
YOU SURPRISED ME!
MY NEXT STOP...
...IS THROUGH WESTERN EUROPE...
...SO I JUST VISITED KANON-KUN'S GRAVE REAL QUICK.

KANON HILBERT
I SAW SOME FRESHLY-PICKED FLOWERS THERE ALREADY...
...SO I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU'D BEEN BY RECENTLY TOO.
BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I'D RUN INTO YOU HERE!
...YOU'RE ALWAYS SOMEWHERE WHERE WE CAN'T REACH YOU BY PHONE...
...SO I THOUGHT I'D NEVER HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK TO YOU AGAIN.
WORD ON THE STREET IS THAT THEY CALL YOU THE "WILDERNESS BROWNIE."
OH THAT!
EVERYONE'S ALWAYS GIVING ME WEIRD NICKNAMES!
BE SURE TO REST EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.
IF ASAZUKI CATCHES YOU, HE'LL MOCK YOU AND ASK WHAT THE BIG HURRY IS.
HMM...
YOU'RE IN TOO BIG A RUSH.
YOU'RE TRYING TOO HARD.
...I'LL BET HE WILL.

WE'RE...
AND ANOTHER THING.
BUT...
...THE SAME GOES FOR YOU TOO, EYES-KUN.
...HOPE, DON'T FORGET!
DON'T HAVE SUCH A DARK FACE ON.
BEING TOO BUSY'S JUST AS BAD AS GIVING IN TO THE CURSE.
BYE-BYE!!
Arrivals
Information
Buses
Restaurant
WELL, I'D BETTER GET GOING.

FU
CHEHD
KA
(CLACK)
EVEN SO...
...ANXIETY AND FEAR LURKS IN EVERY-BODY'S HEART.

特別棟
KO CLICK KO
...CAN HELP HARBORING SOME DOUBT THAT AN UNSPEAKABLE BETRAYAL IS AWAITING THEM.
AND NO-BODY ...
SIGN: SPECIAL WING
THE DESTINY AYUMU DREW UP IS LIKE A DREAM.
AND EVEN IF HIS VISION DOES COME ABOUT...
...A LARGE NUMBER OF SACRIFICES CAN'T BE AVOIDED.
THE CHANCES OF IT NOT BEING FULLY REALIZED OR OF GUIDING EVERYONE TO SELF-DESTRUCTION INSTEAD ARE HIGH.
4
6 7 8

...A NUMBER OF BLADE CHILDREN HAVE ALREADY FALLEN TO THE CURSE...
...AND MET TRAGIC ENDS.
IN REALITY...
POOON (BIIING)
GAA (WHRR)
AND NOTHING'S CHANGED ABOUT HOW SEVERELY SCRUTINIZED THE REMAINING CHILDREN ARE.
SIGN: AYUMU NARUMI
1201
鳴海 歩
PITA (PAUSE)
ピタ...
...DID AYUMU LOOK LIKE HE WAS CRYING.
...ONLY ONCE...

THREE MONTHS AGO...
...AYUMU HAD TO BE ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL FULL-TIME.
WHEN HE'S BY HIMSELF, HE'S PROBABLY DOUBLED OVER IN ANXIETY AND FEAR...
...CRYING TO HIMSELF.
BUT WHEN HE NOTICED ME LOOKING AT HIM, HE QUICKLY FLASHED ME A SMILE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT GOES THROUGH HIS HEAD AS HE LIES AWAKE IN HIS WHITE HOSPITAL ROOM...
...ALONE EVERY NIGHT.
GARA (RATTLE)
HEEEY!
AYU-MUUU.
BUT...
...AYUMU CHOSE THIS.

HE CHOSE TO FIGHT THIS HEARTLESS REALITY...
YOU STILL ALIVE?
...AND DRAW AN OPEN-ENDED DESTINY ...
...AYUMU...
...WAS AWFULLY CALM FOR HEARING THAT HIZUMI-KUN HAD DIED.
HE WOULDN'T SHOW US HOW HE ACTUALLY FEELS.
THIS KIND OF THING...
...IS BOUND TO HAPPEN MORE THAN ONCE HEREAFTER.
...YEAH.
POOON (BELLING)

GAA (WHAT!?)
.....!
...LONG TIME NO SEE.

I HEAR YOU'VE BEEN BUSY TRAVELING ALL OVER EUROPE.
KO (CLICK)
YES.
I'VE BEEN SO TERRIBLY BUSY...
...I EVEN HAVE TO FLY OUT AGAIN THIS EVENING, CAN YOU BELIVE IT?
PEKO (BOW)
I SEE.
SORRY FOR KEEPING YOU, THEN.

YES.
I HATE YOU...
...MORE THAN ANYBODY IN THE WHOLE WORLD.
PITA (PAUSE)
I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK YOU...
OH YEAH.
DO YOU...
...HATE ME?

IF EVEN YOU FORGAVE ME...
...I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO.
...THANK YOU.
KO (CLICK)
KO (CLICK)
PEKO (BOW)
PEOPLE CAN ONLY LIVE IN REALITY...
...BUT I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE THAT WE CAN'T LIVE WITH AT LEAST SOME DREAMS.
...AYUMU'S DESTINY SEEMS ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE EVEN AS WE SPEAK.
EVEN THOUGH HE SAYS HE HAS NOTHING TO BELIEVE IN...
...WHY DO YOU THINK I, WHO BELIEVED IN MYSELF, LOST?

BUT MOST DREAMS BETRAY YOU.
AYUMU'S DREAM COULD VERY WELL SPELL THE END OF THE WORLD.
...EVEN SO, HE CAN'T LET GO OF IT.
THAT'S THE KIND OF DREAM YOU HAVE TO HAVE.
IT'S NOT PROPER TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING ONLY AFTER IT'S SUCCEEDED.
IT'S SIMPLE TO EXPECT A RETURN WHEN SOMETHING'S ALREADY BEEN SUCCESS-FUL.
HOW MUCH CAN SUCH A CALCULATING HEART REALLY GAIN THEN?
ONLY THOSE WHO CAN MOVE FORWARD PRECISELY BECAUSE THEY KNOW ABOUT BETRAYAL AND DARKNESS...
...CANNOT BE ROBBED BY ANYONE ...
...OF THE REALLY GOOD THINGS THEY OBTAIN.
AND THAT'S WHAT...

TRUTH-FULLY...
POOON (RRIING)
...I ONLY HOPE SO.
...IT'S NOT A VERY RELIABLE PLOT.
...WILL SAVE THIS WORLD ...

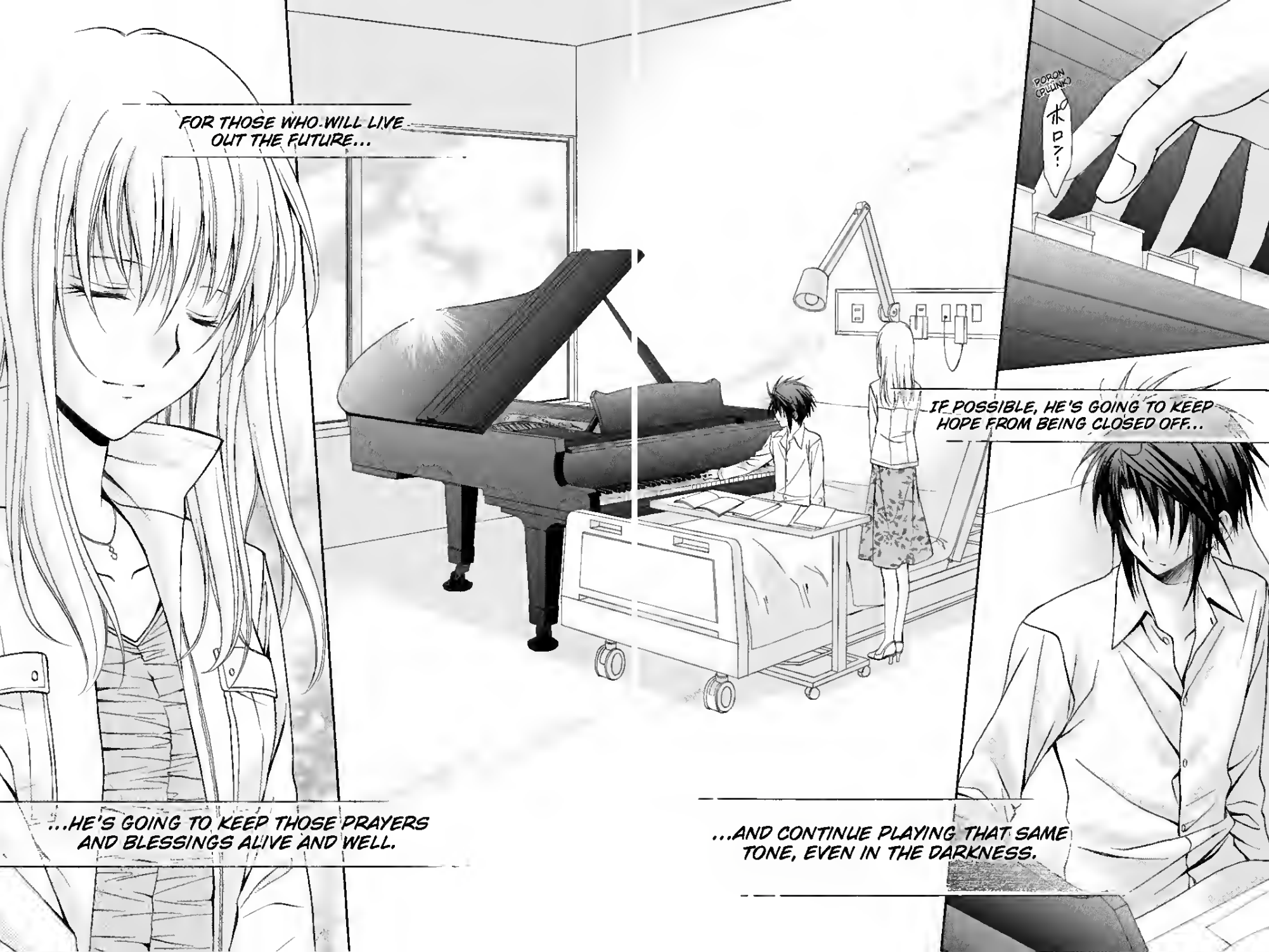
KARI
KARI
KARI
KARI
KARI
KARI (SKRITCH)
KARI
SFX: GUSHA (SCRIBBLE) GUSHA
...LONG TIME NO SEE.
"NARUMI-SAN."

...OH.
IT'S YOU.
SORRY, BUT...
...COULD YOU COME BACK LATER?
I'M BUSY RIGHT NOW.
KACHIN (SNAP)
WHY DID YOU COME HERE...
...ANYWAY?
DON'T BLAME ME.
BISU (FUME)
WHAT KIND OF ATTITUDE IS THAT!?
THIS IS OUR REUNION AFTER NOT SEEING EACH FOR TWO YEARS FOLLOWING OUR HEARTFELT GOOD-BYE, YOU HEAR!?
BISU

...SOMETHING YOU LEFT WITH ME.
...I CAME TO GIVE BACK...
...FOR YOUR INFORMATION...
MUSU (HMPH)
UWAH!
THIS GUY...
...IS AS BARBARIC AS EVER!
KACHI (CLICK)
KACHI
...I LEFT THAT WITH YOU?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WRITING AN ARRANGEMENT FOR A PIANO PIECE.
I'VE BEEN GETTING WORSE, AND NOW MY LEFT HAND IS PARALYZED.
SO I'M MAKING SOMETHING THAT CAN BE PLAYED WITH ONLY THE RIGHT HAND.
SOMETIMES I CAN'T EVEN SEE. THAT'S HOW SERIOUS THINGS HAVE GOTTEN.
...You didn't...
...give up playing the piano, though.
OF COURSE NOT.
I FINALLY ...
...GOT MY MUSIC BACK.

WOULD YOU...
...LIKE TO HEAR A PIECE?
KATA (CLACK)
...WELL...
...ONLY IF YOU BEG ME TO LISTEN TO IT, NARUMI-SAN.
...All right.
"I beg you."


FOR THOSE WHO WILL LIVE OUT THE FUTURE...
...HE'S GOING TO KEEP THOSE PRAYERS AND BLESSINGS ALIVE AND WELL.
PORON (PLUNK)
IF POSSIBLE, HE'S GOING TO KEEP HOPE FROM BEING CLOSED OFF...
...AND CONTINUE PLAYING THAT SAME TONE, EVEN IN THE DARKNESS.

PORON (PLUNK)
ポロン？
IF POSSIBLE, HE'S GOING TO KEEP HOPE FROM BEING CLOSED OFF...
...AND CONTINUE PLAYING THAT SAME TONE, EVEN IN THE DARKNESS.

FOR THOSE WHO WILL LIVE OUT THE FUTURE...
...HE'S GOING TO KEEP THOSE PRAYERS AND BLESSINGS ALIVE AND WELL.

MAY YOU DO SO...
...FOREVER...
Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING
THE END

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

THE LAST!
Spiral Work Diary
-AT LONG LAST! KIYOTAKA NARUMI-
THERE WAS A LOT OF BACK-AND-FORTH REGARDING HOW KIYOTAKA WOULD LOOK, BUT...
IN THIS LAST VOLUME ...
...THE TIME FINALLY CAME WHEN I HAD TO DRAW HIM.
IT COULD SWAY FROM SIDE TO SIDE LIKE A DOG'S TAIL WAGGING!
IF IT'S A PONYTAIL, I THINK IT SHOULD BE TIED UP AS HIGH AS POSSIBLE.
HM...
ASSIS-TANT
THE READERS WILL NEVER SEE IT COMING!
TWO YEARS WILL HAVE PASSED, SO JUST MAKE HIS HAIR LONGER!
EDITOR
ACK!
ACK!
WHAT WILL I DO ABOUT THE HAIR COLOR!?
ACTUALLY, AYUMU IS KIYOTAKA'S CLONE.
HMM, HE LOOKS GOOD IN A WHITE SUIT
IN THE END, THIS IS HOW HE TURNED OUT.
ACTUALLY, I RESISTED HAVING TO DRAW HIM COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM HOW I'D VISUALIZED HIM, BUT...
KARI
KARI (SKRITCH)

...IF AYUMU AND KIYOTAKA WERE CLOSER IN AGE, THEY'D PROBABLY LOOK A BIT MORE ALIKE.
SINCE HE'S OLDER THAN AYUMU, THAT WHOLE "WE'RE CLONES" VIBE DIDN'T REALLY COME ACROSS, BUT...
I DON'T EVEN GET TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE? LAME.
...SO IT WAS TOO BAD HE ONLY GOT TO SHOW UP FOR A COUPLE OF CHAPTERS.
I HAD SO MUCH FUN DRAWING KIYOTAKA ...
...THIS IS OUR FINAL FAREWELL AFTER THE SIX YEARS AND THREE MONTHS THAT YOU'VE STUCK BY ME FOR SPIRAL: THE BONDS OF REASONING...
WELL...
I REALLY AM THANKFUL FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE THIS WHOLE TIME!!
I HOPE TO SEE YOU AGAIN IF THE OPPORTUNITY ARISES.
TO ALL THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MAKING OF THIS BOOK, SHIRODAIRA-SENSEI, OUR EDITOR, AND MY ASSISTANTS ...
...AND OF COURSE, TO ALL YOU READERS!

AFTERWORD

It's Volume 15. I'm Kyo Shirodaira. And this is the final volume.

Thank you so much for following our story to the very end. The reason I was able to do what I had to do and bring this story to its end was all thanks to you readers out there who were willing to read my work.

But I still suspect some of you might feel dissatisfied or even angry about the developments that led to the final chapter. To be honest, a lot of that was due to my own insufficiencies (like the subtitle "The Bonds of Reasoning." What does that even mean?), but I'm sure that there will be those critics with a negative opinion concerning how "Hiyono Yuizaki" ended up being handled.

Even before the truth about her was revealed, I heard voices rising in protest, saying, "I get the feeling you're going there, but please just stop right now." I'm sure not many people want to hear why I decided to do with her what I did, and even if they do, I wouldn't do a very good job explaining my actions. One reason I will mention, however, is that in the end, I wanted her and Ayumu to become "equals." I didn't want their little relationship to end with the simple setup: that she's always there to help, that she owes him, that she's his support, and that she's always with him.

If that truth about her hadn't been so, and Ayumu had won against Kiyotaka and come back to Hiyono, their relationship would depend so heavily on Hiyono's unconditional faith and kindness and would be so incredibly convenient for Ayumu that it'd actually make him more frail than anything.

I'm not even sure that it'd make Hiyono all that happy either.

I'm sorry, I really can't do a good job explaining myself. I just didn't want to make her a convenient supporting character for the hero. I wanted to give her an independent happiness of her own.

I probably shouldn't talk about this anymore. The developments that took place after the "Hizumi Arc" were understood and felt by the readers differently, and it'd be wrong for me, as the writer, to attempt to come up with a clean-cut "answer" that would threaten to quell that diversity of opinion. There are times when I can't even answer the question of why I do things myself. That's how pathetic I am.

But I'll explain just one more thing here. The final showdown scene between Ayumu and Kiyotaka was based on a scene from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. If you're curious as to how it went in Shelley's work, please read the original novel to find out. Even without considering its historical value, it's still a masterpiece. You could even go so far to say that the entirety of the *Spiral* story was based on it in one way or another.

In the end, I wish to offer my sincerest gratitude to Eita Mizuno-*san* and my editor, whom I troubled much over the course of this long story.

I know I'm sounding redundant, but thank you to all you readers for your great cheers of support.

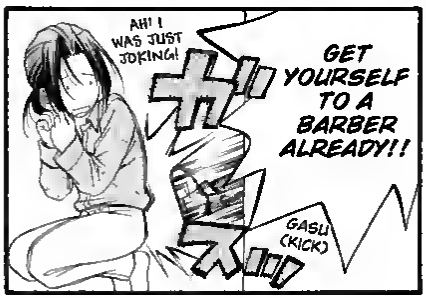
Well, this is it. I'll be praying to meet up again someday.

城平京

KYO SHIRODAIRA

LONG HAIR

IT'S SUCH A BOTHER. JUST CUT IT
PUTTING ASIDE THE AUTHOR'S WISHES...
THIS IS AN OFFERING TO REINFORCE MY PRAYER.
THIS?
...WHY'D YOU GROW YOUR HAIR LONG ANYWAY?



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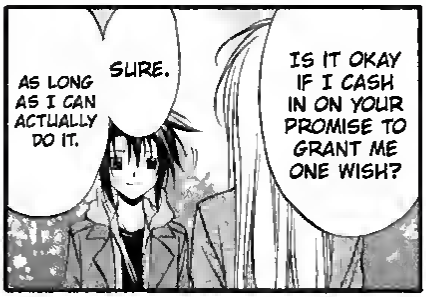
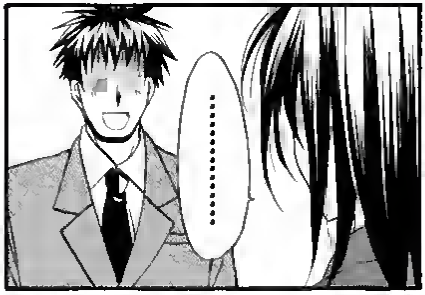


I DIDN'T WANT HIM TO DIE

I'D HAVE LIKED THEM TO AT LEAST SHOW MY FACE FLOATING IN THE SKY OR SOMETHING.
I DIDN'T EVEN GET ONE MEASLY PANEL IN THE LAST CHAPTER.

TWO YEARS AND TWO MONTHS



YOU'RE SO MEAN, ASSISTANT INSPECTOR!
AND YOU SPELLED THE LAST PART OF MY NAME WRONG!
WAH!
IT'S BEEN SO LONG, I FORGOT WHO YOU WERE!!
AHA! IT'S WATA-YAH!!

SFX: PON (POOMF)

✤ WHAT'S DIFFERENT? ✤ FIND SEVEN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE TWO IMAGES!

ANSWERS: KIHOKO'S BURROWS ARE RISING. THE PARFAIT IS DIFFERENT. AYAKO'S GREAT IS SHATTERED. THE LAMP IN THE UPPER-LEFT-HAND CORNER IS LOWER. SUN KING'S SITTING ON THE BED. AYUMU'S SURE BURNS. THE MOON IS RISING. KIYOTAKA APPEARS!

SPIRAL
The Bonds of Reasoning ⑮

Kyo Shirodaira
Eita Mizuno

Translation: Christine Dashiell

Lettering: Alexis Eckerman

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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